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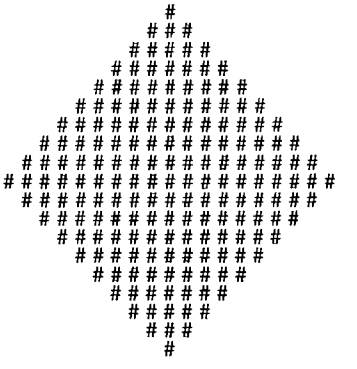

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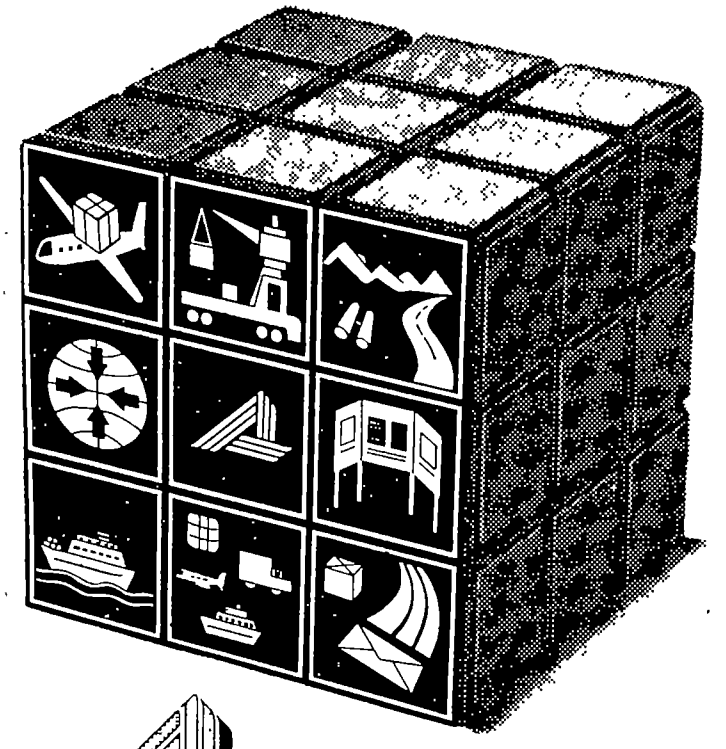

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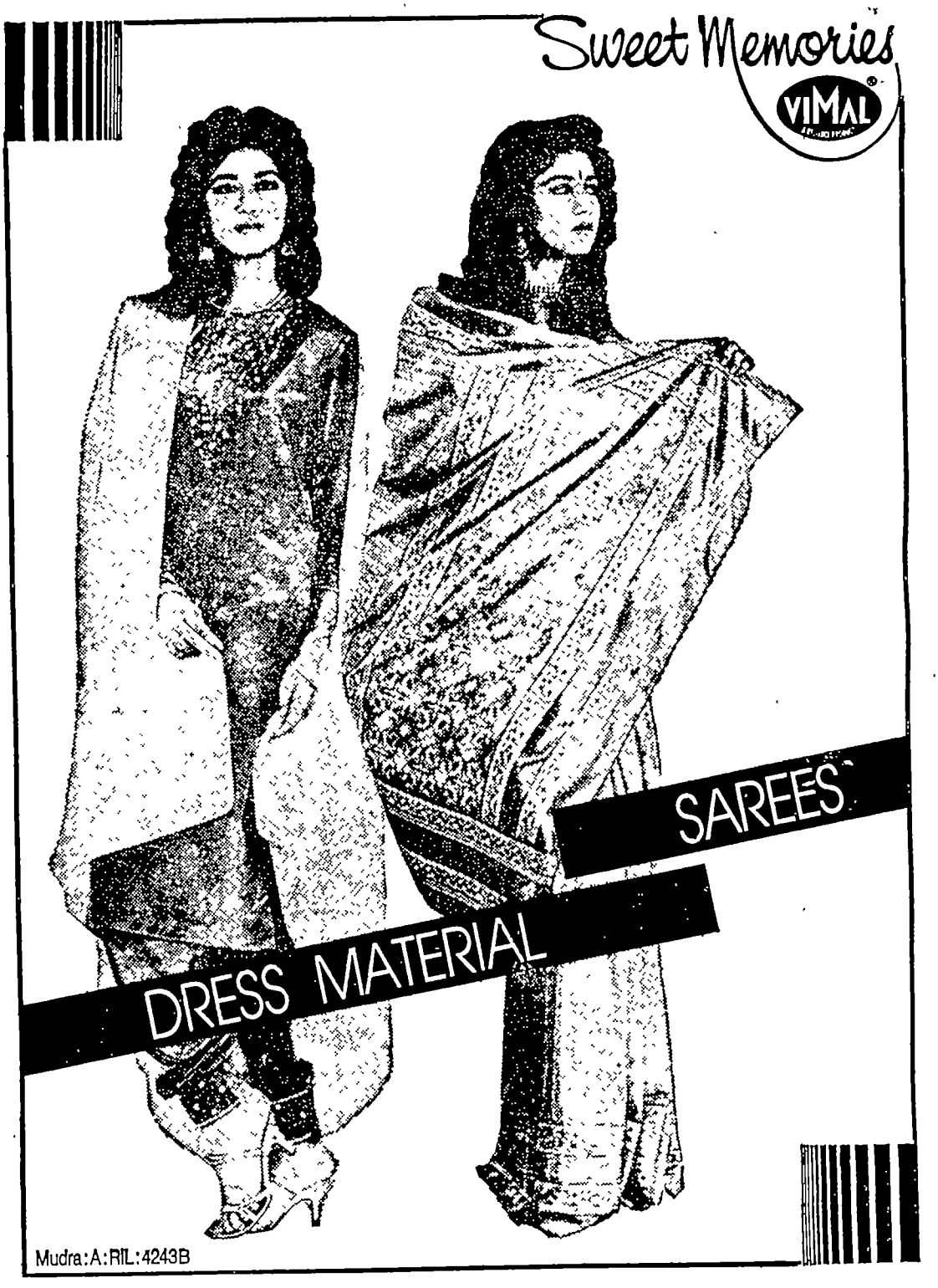
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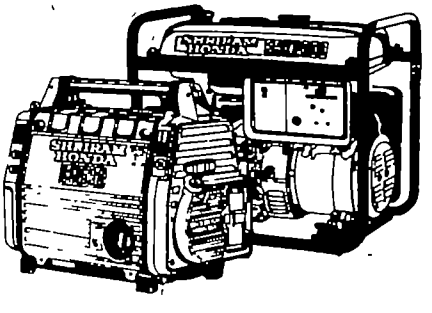

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a symposium on

religion and nation

in post-Ayodhya India

symposium participants

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The problem

RAMA and the steel mill are the symbols of two contesting nationalisms that have been with us before and after Independence. Rama is the symbol of a nationalism which wants to build the Indian nation on the basis of Hindu religion and culture, or at least give it the outward trappings of Hindu religion and culture. The steel mill represents a nationalism which would like to see the Indian nation cast in the modern mould.

For the first time at Ayodhya in December 1992, these two rival conceptions of India as a nation clashed openly and violently. The demolition of the Babri mosque and building in its place a Ram *mandir* would consecrate the Indian nation, so thought the proponents of Hindutva nationalism. A roadside graffiti that appeared en route L.K Advani's *rath yatra* from Somnath to Ayodhya in October 1990 brought out what Lord Rama stood for in the minds of these nationalists. It read, '*Ram drohi, desh drohi*' (the traitor to Ram is a traitor to the nation). The graffiti could well be the epigraph of the entire Ayodhya agitation. What it clearly implied was that only the devotees of Lord Rama are true Indian nationalists. Street icons which appeared at the time of the demolition showed Rama a fierce defendant of national unity.

It must have been in the full flood of the enterprise to make India a modern nation that Jawaharlal Nehru said, probably in the early fifties, that 'steel mills are our new temples.' For him, given his abounding faith in science to transform this 'vast and ancient land,' as he called India, the steel mill was more than a factory: it was a temple of the modern Indian nation.

Does this modernist enterprise hold any promise now? Is the other nation-building enterprise, Rama as the symbol of the nation, a reaction to the modernist enterprise? Or is it a search, however intellectually shallow at present, to relate ourselves to our past? Can and should India be a modern nation? Should we now think of alternatives to the western concepts of nation and the state? These are some of the questions that contributors to this issue of *Seminar* reflect upon.

Before we ask whether these rival perceptions of nationalism can succeed in transforming this country of unimaginable diversity into a modern homogenous nation, I would like to mention here in passing a troubling thought: Why is it that only these two kinds of nationalisms, out of a rich body of nationalist thinking represented by such diverse minds as Bankim, Tilak, Tagore and Gandhi, came to gain such salience in post-independent India? Were all other nationalisms out of place with the modernist tempo of independent India?

The nationalisms of the Nehruvian variety, with steel mill and dams as its symbols, has become the near official credo of the Indian state and the opium of the secular intelligentsia. The nationalism of the Hindutva variety, with Rama as its symbol, is the political plank of the BJP and the ideology of political-religious organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal and assorted *akhadas* of sadhus.

Both profess to make India a modern nation. The term nation, as the other tangle of terms like national identity, nation-state, nationalism, has taken on many meanings. Here I define it as a community whose members share myths of common descent, common homeland and something of common culture. A nation is Janus-faced: one face looks to the future, the other to the past.

Nation, nationalism, national identity are distinctly modern phenomena, about as old as the French Revolution of 1789, but the modernity that this phenomena represents grew out of things that were distinctly pre-modern. Myths of common descent, shared memories, folk culture, com-

mon ethnic, religious, racial bonds, shared enmity, all went into the making of a nation. This is what came to constitute some of the oldest of nations, Britain, France, Spain. In contrast, Yugoslavia was created totally *à nouveau* and has now died.

It is this sense of belonging to the past that is absent in the Nehruvian conception of the nation. For him an Indian would emerge out of a Bengali, Gujrati or an Assami, as the Indian nation would emerge out of the mosaic of Bharat through the process of modern education, urbanization, social mobility, economic development, communications and so on. State sponsored modernization would make India a modern nation Many still believe this.

Nehruvian nationalists thought that state and citizenship were the two key elements on which a nation could be built The Raj created the Indian state and our Constitution-makers made common citizenship the basis of nationhood. For a country as diverse as ours, common citizenship, sans any religious, ethnic or racial bounds, can hardly be the only basis of national identity.[1]

Citizenship means something more than legal identification in countries founded on ethnicity. For example, Germans, wherever they live and for however long they have lived outside of the country, (in Romania, Poland, Russia, for centuries) can claim German citizenship at any time On the other hand, Turks, some of them of second generation, do not have automatic rights to citizenship in Germany. Even in France and England, where race or ethnicity is officially denied to be the basis of citizenship, people of Asian, African and Arab descent are discriminated against in the matter of granting of citizenship.

1 See my 'Demolition and the Nation-State Problematique', 'OK onomische Liberalisierung und politischer Fundamentalismus', *Comparativ*, 4 Jahrgang, 1994, Heft 6, pp 78-92

Nation-building through the agency of the state that Nehru embarked upon continues till today. It is an ongoing process and therefore any judgement as to whether it has succeeded or failed can only be tentative. Of course the mighty Indian state has successfully met challenges to its authority, in Telengana in the fifties and in Punjab and Kashmir today. In the North East, the repression of local cultures by the state is a permanent feature of our political scene.

Has the state of the Raj today become a nation, after nearly fifty years of experimenting to make it one? Many multi-ethnic developing countries have attempted to transform the colonial state they inherited from their colonizers into modern nations. The process has been bloody and often futile, for example, Iraq, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Chad, Indonesia to name a few. Only in Western Europe, where the state and the nation originated independently of each other in early modern times, have they come together. I believe this development is too uniquely European to be replicated elsewhere.

The secular intelligentsia led by Nehru wanted to build India into a modern nation, outside history. Perhaps it is the terrible event of the Partition that made Nehru and others at the helm think that it was best to begin the nation-making enterprise anew. History had become much too contentious. The Muslims under Jinnah read history as a vindication of their claim for a separate nation. Nationalists use history in the way generals use weapons – to win a war. Thus, the Hungarian nationalists told their people in the late 19th century that their country was a nation in AD 890. It took a particular reading of history to invent the Hungarian nation.

Indian nationalists ignored history, and whatever little history that came through in their writings and speeches

was one that supported their belief that from times immemorial India was always a nation! Thus, Nehru reverentially spoke of Ashok and Akbar, and today in our secular historiography these two figures appear as symbols of a 'progressive secular' nation. I remember a scholar, presumably a Nehru acolyte, once state on the radio on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha that Buddha stood for secularism, socialism and democracy.

But perhaps there was another reason why Nehru and others at the time of Independence thought history, culture, religion, mattered little in the nation-making process. I think they read the experience of England, their model nation, wrongly. The England they knew or read about was the England of the middle and late 19th century, a prosperous and secure nation. It could afford to espouse a humane basis of nationhood: common citizenship (civic loyalty, as J.S. Mill called it) as the basis of nation But much more went into the making of the English nation the levelling of old cultural, political, religious and linguistic diversities by centuries of domination of some ethnic groups, the absolutist state under the Tudors and the Church of England Nation-making even there was a bloody endeavour.

We shunned this path of nation-making. But are we a nation after some fifty years of trying to be one? If by nation one means a relatively homogenous national community in a given territory, then we are far from being one. What we have instead is a state that manages our vast diversity by coercion or consent The nation exists only in the images fabricated by Doordarshan and officially sponsored cultural festivals Such a nation is at best synthetic. It cannot speak to us in the way Marlowe's and Corneille's portrayals of the English and French nations spoke to the English and the French people

The BJP theoretician, K.N. Govindacharya, realizes that the nation of the Nehruvian conception cannot speak to the Indians, at least to a majority of them, the Hindus. He thinks that the Indian nation must evoke the Indian past to give people a sense of identity Nation then is a strange phenomenon of modernity in that its emergence is deeply linked with certain elements of the pre-modern past, like myth, rituals, religion, race, ethnicity. Whether this past is invented, imagined or real is besides the point.

Explaining the significance of the Ayodhya movement, Govindacharya said, it was to bring together Bharat, the pre-modern cultural, religious entity, and India,[2] the modern creation of the Raj. Elsewhere he said the movement was an 'appeal to link one's mind, one's roots.'[3] He spoke like a German romantic nationalist of the 18th century.

This is Hindutva nationalism, an antidote, as its proponents say to the 'soulless territorial nationalism' of the Congress Party Today its symbol is Rama, but he is not Rama of the Ramayana. He is the Rama of the Hindutva ideology, a kind of Hindu Bismarck clothed in religious garb. The BJP leader, L.K Advani, is more explicit than Govindacharya as to the significance of the Ayodhya movement. Three years before his *rath yatra* of 1990, he said that the mandir-masjid controversy was 'not just a legal issue, nor is it merely a question of history. It is essentially a question of a nation's identity, (with) whom must this nation identify, Rama or Babur.'[4] For him religion is simply an instrument of politics and he has used it with remarkable success. In the name of religion he politically mobilized people, and thus increased the BJP's share of votes from ten per cent in 1989 to twenty-five per cent in 1996 Is this mobilization possible any longer?

For the BJP, a key constituent of Sangh Parivar, the purpose behind the Ayodhya agitation was to unify the diverse Hindu social order, and nationalism was the means to do it. The endeavour began with reformist thinkers like Swamy Dayanand Saraswati, Tilak, Savarkar, Golwalkar and others. They did not greatly succeed in their venture. Will the proponents of present-day Hindutva fare better?

The Nehruvian and Hindutva nationalisms seek to create a nation. For Nehruvian nationalists the state is the main agent of nation-building. For Hindutva nationalists, culture is as important an agent as the state. Some of them, like Savarkar or perhaps Advani today, regard culture as a mere instrument to forge a modern nation. But others like Guru Golwalkar or Govindacharya today, believes that the Indian nation must embody something of Hindu culture.

Hindutva nationalism thus provides an important element nearly absent in Nehruvian nationalism: common culture (myths, rites, rituals, folklore fall within the category of culture) that gives a feeling to the people of a given area that they are one.

It is the nature of Hinduism, however, that frustrates the Hindutva nationalists' effort to tease out of Hinduism a nationalist creed. Hindutva nationalism and Hinduism do not complement each other in the same way that Lutheran Protestantism or Anglical Protestantism complemented German and English nationalisms.[5]

The Ayodhya episode illustrates this well. Rama became a contested symbol of the nation right after Hindutva nationalists demolished the Babri mosque at Ayodhya in December 1991. Whose Rama, Mayavati would ask, while campaigning for the assembly election in Uttar Pradesh in November 1993? Rama of Ramayan is revered by all; Rama as a symbol of Indian nation at once divides the Hindu social order. Apart from clashing economic and political interests among them, if one can at all speak of the Hindus as a people united by a single common

2 Cited in *Ayodhya and the Future of India* edited by Jitendra Bajaj Centre for Policy Studies Madras, 1993 p 186

3 Ibid , p 187

4 Press statement, 30 March 1987

5. This point has been made by several scholars of European nationalism It has now been brilliantly made by Liah Greenfeld in her study, *Nationalism Five Roads to Modernity*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1992

faith, the idea of a Hindu nation (in the modern sense) would be alien to their thinking.

The Hindutva nationalists' efforts to translate the presumed cultural untity of the Hindus into a political unity is fundamentally misconceived. L.K Advani is right when he says that India has always been a Hindu *rashtra*. But this *rashtra* is a cultural entity, not a political community (nation). And his mistake is to believe that the two are one and the same or that one can be made out of the other.

Indeed, there is a nation of Ramayana and the Mahabharata. If ever there was a nation (in the cultural sense) founded on epics it was this land between the Himalayas and the Indian Ocean On the slope leading to the temple of Kedarnath one also sees a Hindu nation; you see there the pilgrims from all over the country. But this is a cultural nation or a *Kulturnation*, as the German romantic nationalists of the 18th century called it, and it is very different from the modern nation. A *Kulturnation* can have multiple centres of power and authority and many forms of government. On the other hand, the modern nation is the exclusive locus of authority and loyalty.

Hinduism cannot provide the basis of Indian nationhood in the way English Protestantism or French Catholicism (after the decline of Papal authority in the 16th century) could provide[6] the basis of English and French nationhoods, the oldest of nations.

Tagore marvelled at and Savarkar bemoaned the intrinsic plurality of Hinduism. It is difficult to fashion a coherent political ideology out of it. Without a core of immutable doctrines, teleology or organized priesthood, and being non-proselytizing, this religion cannot spawn a nationalist creed.

We cannot be a nation. We ought to accept this reality, now that we are nearly reaching the age of fifty. A recent study, *The Peoples of India* project,[7] shows that there are today some 3,000 castes, subcastes and other religious, social and occupational affiliations. I am not suggesting that these old identities will not erode as a result of modernization (the hope of the Nehruvian nationalists); they are already being eroded But what may emerge is not one grand national identity subsuming all other identities. Even where modernization has gone very far, old identities and affiliations keep asserting themselves: Qubecois in Canada, Scots in the United Kingdom, Bretagnes in France and Catalons in Spain. Ethnic stirrings in western Europe, the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the USSR and the disappearance of whatever little there was by way of the state in Rwanda, Zaire, Sudan – are events that question some recent theoretical explanations of the phenomena of nation and nationalism Without going into a detailed critique of the theories of nationalism put forward by Anderson, Hobsbawn and Smith, let me say that all of them are based on the European experience of nation-making. The European experience is indeed of great relevance in studying nationalisms of the non-western world because they are basically derived from western ideas of the nation and nationalism.

But studies showing how non-western nationalisms are similar or different from the European phenomenon are now only of academic interest and do not really grapple with some major problems that many multi-ethnic third world countries face today. Could they ever become nation-states? Should they not search for other forms of political organization that preserve their plurality?

As I have argued here, neither the nationalism symbolized by the steel mill nor by Rama can transform this multi-ethnic society into a nation-state. In reality India is a *Kulturnation*. It has always been that, but there is one vital difference between the *Kulturnation* of the past and the one of today: now there is the state. However, in India the state cannot become congruous with the cultural community in the way it did in western Europe (notably France and Britain) in the 18th century, or, by a very different process from the European one, in China. There was the Chinese imperial state dating back to the third century BC and there was the Chinese nation in making, built on the numerical, cultural and culinary strength of the Hans. We cannot be like China or France.

The modern Indian state and the *Kulturnation* coexist uneasily with each other today. Such unease is experienced by all, even the more culturally homogenous countries of western Europe. Multi-culturalism is their new problem, rather a serious one, for it calls into question, at least conceptually, some of the fundamental premises on which the West has organized its society and politics since the beginning of modernity.

It is most difficult to construct a relationship in which the modern state does not subsume a *Kulturnation*. That danger is always there. The foremost exponent of *Kulturnation*, Johann Gottfried Herder, clearly recognized this and therefore he railed against the Hobbesian kind of state that was emerging in 18th century Europe. However, at a time when many parts of the developing world are riven by atavistic nationalisms, complete autonomy of the *Kulturnation* from the state would simply result in strife and chaos. Various *Kulturnations* within the territory of a state would be at war with each other. Yugoslavias would be repeated all over the third world.

What is needed at the moment is not an abstract autonomy of the *Kulturnation* from the state but rather an end to the role of the state as a nation builder. It is the state in the nation-making role that has brought about the strife in Punjab, Kashmir and the North East. The state must not be fastened to our *Kulturnation*; it ought to be loosely strung to it.

BHARAT WARIAVWALLA

6 Ibid. Chapters 1 and 2, pp 1-187

7 *Peoples of India Project*, Anthropological Survey of India, Calcutta, 1992, pp 17-66

Roots of Indian nationalism

B R NANDA

IN 1884, Sir John Strachey, a retired member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, was invited by the University of Cambridge to deliver a series of lectures on India. 'This is the first and foremost thing to learn about India,' he said, 'that there is not and never was an India.' Strachey thought it was impossible that men of Bombay, Punjab, Bengal and Madras should ever feel that they belonged to one great Indian nation. He spoke a year before the Indian National Congress held its first meeting in Bombay. Little did he know that there were already forces at work imbuing the people of India with the spirit of nationalism which within a matter of six decades would compel the British to wind up their rule in India

The belief of Strachey and his fellow 'guardians of the British Empire' that an Indian nationality was a pipe dream rested on their observation of the diversity of race, caste, religion and language in the Indian subcontinent. They failed to see that beneath this diversity lay the substratum of a long, unbroken cultural tradition. There were countries such as Egypt and Iraq which had more ancient civilisations than India, but they had been forgotten by their inhabitants until they were resurrected by western archaeologists and historians. In India there was no such break; the ancient Vedic hymns being recited were exactly the same as they were three thousand years ago. The Indian peninsula, with its high mountain ranges in the north and the oceans lapping its coast, had better marked frontiers than Europe Africa had a similar geographical identity but its inhabitants had no sense of belonging to the same cultural unit Since ancient times, the people of India had been conscious of their cultural unity Pilgrims trudged across the country irrespective of political frontiers to Kedarnath in the north, Dwarka in the west, Puri in the east and Madurai and Kanyakumari in the south. Similarly, Ajmer and Amritsar were magnets for Muslim and Sikh pilgrims. Millions of Hindus through the centuries while performing ceremonial ablutions recited the mantra: 'Hail O ye Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri, come and approach these waters.'

It is, of course, true that India had never been a nation-state. But nationalism in the sense which we understand it today – the identification of the state and the nation, the feeling of supreme loyalty of the individual is due to the nation-state – is a phenomenon of recent growth. Even in Europe it became important only towards the end of the 18th century. It received a boost from the American and French Revolutions, the Napoleonic wars, the revolution of 1848 in Europe and the struggles for reunification of Germany and Italy in the latter half of the 19th century. The final triumph of the idea of the nation-state came only in the second decade of the 20th century after the First World War with the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian and Turkish empires.

Through its long history, India had been politically fragmented. But the idea of *chakravartin* – a monarch exercising sway over the entire country – lived on in the collective unconscious of the Indian people, even though it was only occasionally realised such as under the Mauryan and Gupta dynasties. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the whole subcontinent came under the umbrella of Mughal rule and the Mughal emperor came to be recognised as the paramount ruler of India. It was not without reason that for many years the East India Company kept up the fiction that it was ruling its

territories as the agent of the Mughal emperor in Delhi; evidently the fiction was useful in securing the allegiance of the people

In May 1857, the mutinous soldiers of Meerut instinctively turned to Delhi to seek the leadership of the Mughal emperor. Curiously enough, the unification of India brought about by the British rulers struck English-educated intelligentsia in the 19th century as the realisation of the age-old aspiration of the Indian people for political unity When Lord Lytton organised the Imperial Durbar in Delhi in January 1877 to mark the assumption of the title of *Kaiser-i-Hind* by Queen Victoria, the Indian press compared the spectacle to the *rajsuya yajna* of Yudhistra and the assemblage of the nobles from all parts of India at the Mughal court An address to the Queen Empress from the Sarvajanik Sabha, Poona, the premier political association of western India, referred to the 'great work of union'. has been continued with unabated progress for a whole generation ... and many races and tribes and varieties of creed and language are . forgetting their old differences and petty traditions and are being welded together into a great and homogenous nation '

II

It is an irony of history that in the very process of consolidating their rule the British unleashed forces which were to strengthen Indian nationalism. They brought the entire subcontinent under their rule and thus created an all-India state on which Indian patriotism could focus itself. As Carl Friedrich says in his *Man and His Government* (New York, 1963) 'the building of the state comes first and it is within the political framework that the nation comes into being '

It was in the 19th century that the modern systems of transport and communication – the railways, the postal system and the newspapers – linked different parts of India Edwin Arnold, the author of the Light of Asia, prophesied in 1865 that the 'Railways may do for India what dynasties have never done – what the genius of Akbar could not do: they may make India a nation.' Twenty years later, after ten thousand miles of railway track had been laid, Madhav Rao, the Dewan of Travancore, wrote:

> What a glorious change the railways has made in old and long neglected India! The young generation cannot fully understand it. In passing from the banks of Tambraparni to those of the Ganga what varied scenes, what nationalities and languages flew across ... Tamil, Telugu, Canarese, Marathi, Gujarati, Hindustani, Bengali, populations which had been isolated for unmeasured ages now easily mingle In my long journeys it has struck me that if India is to become a homogenous nation, it must be by means of transport and by means of English language as the medium of communication.

It is not surprising that young R. C. Dutt, who was later to make a mark as a civilian, economist and politician, was thrilled by his first visit to north India by train. 'All that is heroic', he wrote, 'in Indian history and traditions and that is brilliant in Indian history connect themselves with north India ... The nation which has a past has a future also and the faith and destiny of our nation will survive the degradation of the present.' Keshub Chundra Sen, the great religious leader of Bengal, was pleasantly surprised to find during his visit to Madras and Bombay in 1864 that the people in these presidencies were not very different from those in Bengal. Two years later, he organised the Brahmo Samaj of India

The railways were not the only instrument of integration. No less important was the vast country-wide market which the British created. And when they favoured British capital and British importers, they provoked Indian resentment which in turn fuelled economic nationalism. Then there was the uniformity in laws, taxes and institutions which the British brought about They did this in their own imperial interests, but when there was opposition to a particular measure, it at once became an all-Indian question. This happened in 1860 when there was an uproar against the levy of income-tax and in 1880 over the Ilbert Bill regarding discrimination in the trial of Europeans.

These protests were spearheaded by the English-educated class, the only politically conscious and articulate element in the country. It was from this class that the founding fathers of the Indian National Congress were drawn. They were the products of the newly established Indian universities. Their vision of India's future was influenced by their Whiggish perception of British history as a continuous unfolding of constitutional liberty and individual freedom. It appeared to them that after centuries of political disunity, social stagnation and economic backwardness, India had an opportunity of imbibing from the West the spirit of progress and reform and winning her place in the comity of nations. In this great adventure they looked forward to guidance and support from the British people, and dreamt of the day when India would graduate to self-government like other British dominions.

III

The Indian National Congress, which became the most important political organisation working for Indian freedom, from the first held forth the vision of a united, liberal, and democratic India. It was inclusive in its approach, seeking to transcend the barriers of caste, creed and language, and to nurture a pan-Indian nationalism.

There has been a tendency among historians to belittle the contribution of the moderate era to Indian nationalism; its leaders have often been dismissed as mere practitioners of the politics of petition, prayer and protest. However, the basic value-system of the national movement dates from that period. The first generation of Congress leaders included some remarkable men of great ability, integrity and vision. They were deeply influenced by Gladstonian liberalism; they were remarkably free of regional and sectarian prejudices, and believed in the rule of law, individual liberty and parliamentary

democracy. They loved India and wanted their country to find its due place in the modern world. Gokhale, the youngest and perhaps the ablest of them, was speaking not only for himself, when he referred in the constitution of the Servants of India Society in June 1905 to the growth during the last fifty years of a feeling of common nationality, based upon common traditions, common disabilities and common hopes and aspirations and the fact 'that we are Indians first and Hindus, Muhammedans, Parsees or Christians afterwards is being realised in a steadily increasing measure'

The policy direction of the Congress in the first thirty years was mainly in the hands of three great Parsi patriots, Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and D. S. Wacha, who were assisted by two great friends of India in Britain, Hume and Wedderburn, and by able young men like Gokhale in India. The most influential figure in the Congress in India during the first twenty years was undoubtedly Pherozeshah Mehta. He was a brilliant lawyer with a towering personality; no one ever accused him of sectarianism, parochialism or nepotism during the many years he dominated the politics of Bombay and of the Indian National Congress

With such men at the helm, it was only to be expected that the Congress would adopt a pluralist platform. But the objective conditions were also such as dictated this policy. Political awakening was confined to a small urban elite composed mostly of English-educated Indians in the three Presidencies of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Between 1853 and 1888, no more than 8,000 graduates had been turned out by all the Indian universities. Most Indians tended to think in terms of their region, community or caste

A study of the early years of the Congress would show that it had to contend with the implacable hostility of the British bureaucracy in India The political climate in Britain was not congenial either A few months after the Congress came into existence, began a period of Tory ascendancy in British politics which lasted for nearly two decades. In India the Congress had to face opposition not only from the feudal elements who flourished on the bounty of the British Raj – and the princes, landlords, the caste leaders – but from Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh school of thought This proved a grievous handicap. Even Badruddin Tyabji, who presided over the 1887 Congress at Madras, was so rattled by Sir Syed's tirade as to suggest to A. C. Hume to discontinue Congress meetings for some time because of the misgivings prevalent in the Muslim community.

Challenged from within and without, the Congress leaders did their best to build up a united front against the British. This they did by keeping religious and social controversies off the agenda of the Congress. British statesman and commentators never tired of advising Congress leaders to take interest in social reform, but the Congress did not fall into this trap. They knew that social and religious issues would inevitably divide the people, while the need of the hour was unity against the British bureaucracy. Dadabhai Naoroji declared at the second session of the Congress in 1886 that the Congress was a political body representing the political aspirations of the Indian people, and must, therefore, confine itself to questions in which the entire nation had a direct interest.

Dadabhai's instinct was sound; the debate on the Age of Consent Bill convulsed Bengal and Maharashtra in the early 1890s. It took all the skill of the Congress leadership to save the Poona Congress session (1895) from being wracked by controversies over social reform. The Congress leaders took great care to soften inter-provincial jealousies by rotating the annual sessions among the principal towns of India and by carefully weighing the claims of different communities and regions while choosing the Congress president for a particular year.

A deliberate and sustained attempt was made to preserve the neutrality of the organisation on religious issues, to hold the scales evenly between the communities and to disarm the suspicion and fears of the minorities. In 1887 the Congress declined to take up the question of cow-slaughter. In 1888 it passed a resolution that no subject could be discussed at a Congress session if the majority of Hindu or Muslim delegates as a body objected. In 1908 it was laid down in the Congress constitution that one-fourth of the total number of representatives on the All-India Congress Committee should be Muslim. The Congress president was authorised to nominate delegates to the Subject Committee of the Congress to represent the minorities.

In 1901 when the Congress was held at Lahore, it refused, to the great annoyance of the local Punjabi Hindu leaders, to record its disapproval of the Punjab Land Alienation Act because of Muslim opposition. In 1913 the Congress dropped its previous resolution deprecating the extension of the principle of communal representation to local bodies; in 1916 it went so far as to agree to separate electorates in the Lucknow Pact.

The Congress remained firmly objective about communal differences. When there were riots in the 1890s in Bombay and Poona, it did not enter the fray. Individual Congressmen may have dabbled in controversies on Urdu and Hindi and on cow-protection in the U.P., but the Congress as an organisation never did so. The vast majority of delegates in the Congress sessions were Hindus, but no demands on behalf of the Hindus were ever put forward; indeed, communal and sectarian issues were never allowed to cloud the proceedings of the Congress.

A scrutiny of the proceedings of the Congress sessions and its resolutions would reveal that the Congress concentrated its attention on issues on which there was a broad consensus in the country, such as extension of elective element in legislature, equitable readjustment of financial burdens between India and Britain, reduction of military expenditure in India, separation of executive and judiciary, scaling down of land revenue, extension of elementary education, devolution of greater powers to local bodies, and the grievances of Indians overseas.

Some historians have seen in the agitation which followed in the wake of the Bengal Partition an upsurge of Hindu revivalism It is true that during the agitation against the Partition of Bengal the extremist leaders such as Aurobindo Ghose, Bipin Chandra Pal sometimes invoked Hindu symbols, but there was no anti-Muslim tinge in them In his book *Indian Awakening* published in 1909, Ramsay Macdonald, a Labour M.P. who was one day to become the Prime Minister of Britain, wrote after a visit to India that Indian nationalists tended to look back to India's glorious past, but this tendency to hark back to a real or imaginary past was not peculiar to Indian nationalists, it was characteristic of embattled nationalism. The Irish had done so in the 19th century

From a study of Aurobindo Ghose's collected works, it would be seen that all his barbed shafts and passionate eloquence were directed against the colonial rulers As for the Hindu symbols, it is true that in the Hindu tradition God is envisaged some times as a mother, some times as a father and even as a child In Christian thought God is the Father in Heaven. These are just conceptions of an ultimate reality which remain mysterious to the average human mind The Bengali or Maharashtrian revolutionaries who took to the Gita, did so not because of sectarianism or religious fanaticism, but because in performing their dark and daring deeds they needed some inspiration and psychological support From the *Gita* they learnt the lesson of performing their duty without hankering after a reward They also learnt from the *Gita* that the body is perishable but the soul lives With such thoughts they could better resist temptations and keep up their morale against heavy odds

It is curious that Bal Gangadhar Tilak, whom the British painted as a political radical and a Hindu revivalist, was considered a friend of the Muslims by Jinnah and Maulana Mohammed Ali. It is true that he organized the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals in Maharashtra. He made no secret of the fact that he was doing so to promote political awakening. These celebrations had an anti-British, not an anti-Muslim edge; that is why he became the bete noire of the British authorities.

IV

In 1919 we come to the final phase of the national movement, the Age of Gandhi, which began with his plunge into national politics after the passage of the Rowlatt Bill and ended with his death in 1948. A Gujarati *bania*, he lived for twenty years in South Africa, where his followers included Tamilian Hindus, Gujarati Muslims, Indian Christians and even some Europeans. His ideas and methods did not quite fit in with those of the moderates or the extremists, the two factions whose rivalries had paralysed the Indian National Congress for more than a decade By the end of 1918, both the factions were played out and there was a vacuum of leadership at the top, which was to be filled by Gandhi. His greatest asset was a new ideology and a new method, non-violent resistance, a practical alternative to speech-making and bomb-throwing between which Indian politics had so far oscillated

'And then Gandhi came,' Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in his autobiography 'He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breath, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, he was like a whirlwind that upset many things but most of all the working of peoples' minds.' Gandhi's charisma was tailor-made for that generation. As Subhas Chandra Bose, no uncritical admirer, recalled in his *Indian Struggle*, 'Gandhi was not too revolutionary for the majority of his countrymen. If he had been so he would have frightened them, instead of inspiring them, repelled them, instead of drawing them. He wanted to unite them, the Hindus and Muslims, the high caste and the low caste and the capitalists and the labour, the landlords and peasants By his humanitarian outlook and freedom from hatred, he was able to receive sympathy even in his enemy's camp'

Gandhi spoke in an idiom which the common people readily understood: the battle between good and evil, the higher and baser ideals made more sense to them than the niceties of constitutional debates could ever have done. The Indian masses – especially the Hindu masses – loved and venerated him for turning his back on worldly ambitions. This direct link with the people gave him a unique advantage; his influence did not depend upon any office he held in the Congress and indeed it was independent of the success or failure which attended his campaigns.

Gandhi had his charisma, but he had something more He was a thinker as well as a man of action. He was the Marx as well as the Lenin of the Indian Revolution He had a genius for organization; in a few months he converted the thirty five years old Indian National Congress from an annual three-day conference into a broad-based mass movement. He shifted the Congress from its old moorings; he restructured it. He knew how to train and harness talented men and women to public causes. He picked up promising men of diverse abilities and temperament, hailing from different parts of India such as Jawaharlal Nehru, C. Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, T. Prakasam and others, who were to form the vanguard of the nationalist movement. With his immense appeal to the masses, Gandhi symbolised in his own person the basic unity of Indian nationalism, thus providing a prophylactic against the tendency of national movements towards schism.

Gandhi's civil disobedience movements were a source of great anxiety and tension to the British Each campaign seemed to peter out after some time when the torrent of civil resisters became a trickle. After each campaign, the government felt it had scored a victory over the Congress and that Gandhi was finished as a political leader. This turned out to be a delusion. Gandhiji's was a mode of warfare in which he could lose all the battles, and yet win the war. His method

created a dilemma for the British. If the nationalist upsurge had become violent, this problem would have been relatively simple for them. As it was, they found that neither indifference nor repression really worked against Gandhi Non-intervention allowed the agitation to snowball; repression of unarmed men and women, who refused to retaliate, won the sympathy of the multitude and deepened its alienation from the Raj

The imperial base of collaboration was eroded over the years. The princes, the landlords and the titled gentry lost their influence and were of little use in bolstering the prestige of the Raj until the thousand-odd British civil servants in India found the task of governing the country unmanageable. As Arnold Toynbee put it, Gandhi made it impossible for the British to go on ruling India, but at the same time he made it possible for the British 'to abdicate without rancour and without dishonour'

V

The victory of Indian nationalism when it came in 1947, was to Gandhi's great sorrow, flawed in one crucial respect; it was accompanied by the secession of Muslim-majority areas in the east and the west No one did more to warn against the dangers of the division of the country or to prevent it, but oddly enough, part of the blame for this denouement has been laid at his door. He has been accused of alienating the Muslim community by giving a Hindu tinge to the national movement. Alternatively, he has been accused of failure to stem the tide of Muslim separatism

It is a strange paradox, however, that though Gandhi was deeply religious, his politics were completely secular This is an aspect of his life and teachings much misunderstood and misinterpreted Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out in his autobiography how the word 'religion' had lost all precise significance and only caused confusion, and that it would be better to use other words with more limited meanings such as metaphysics, spirituality, philosophy, morality, ethics, dogma, ceremonials. If we carefully study Gandhi's concept of religion, we will find that it simply amounted to an ethical framework for the conduct of everyday life. He had studied the scriptures of all major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism and come to the conclusion that there was an underlying unity beneath the clash of religious doctrines and forms It was the way a man lived, not the recital of a verse, or the form of prayer which made him a good Christian, a good Muslim or a good Hindu.

Gandhi has been accused of mixing religion with politics and 'Hinduising' nationalist politics The confusion arises from the failure of the critics to appreciate what Gandhi meant by religion. His concept of religion had nothing in common with what commonly passes for organised religion – dogmas, superstition, rituals and bigotry. When he talked of spirituating politics, he echoed the sentiments of his political mentor, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who wanted to enlist the spirit of dedication and sacrifice normally reserved for religious renunciation for secular ends, that is for the social and political regeneration of India

Gandhi's use of such words as *swaraj* (self government) *sarvodaya* (uplift of all), *ahimsa* (non-violence) and *satyagraha* was exploited by the Muslim League during the campaign for Pakistan to estrange Muslims from the nationalist struggle. The fact is that these expressions when used by Gandhi had no religious connotations. They were derived from Sanskrit, but since most of the regional languages in India are derived from Sanskrit, this made them the more easily intelligible to the masses. The English (or Persian) translation of these words, or a purely legal or constitutional terminology may have sounded to his critics more 'modern' and 'secular', but it would have simply passed over the heads of all but a tiny, urbanised English-educated minority.

The protagonists of Pakistan and later writers have made much of the phrase 'Ram Rajya' which Gandhi occasionally used to describe the ideal society. But this was only Gandhi's equivalent for the English term utopia. He was employing, what Morris Jones aptly described as the saintly idiom; the common people whom he addressed instinctively understood that he was not referring to the monarchical form of government described in the Ramayana, but to an ideal polity free from inequality, injustice and exploitation It is significant that when Gandhi addressed meetings in 1938 in the North-Western Frontier Province, with its predominantly Muslim population, he used the words 'Khudai Raj' and explained that it meant the same thing as Ram Rajya or the Kingdom of God.

Gandhi had the genius for adapting traditional ideas and symbols to modern needs, transforming them in the process. He transmitted the centuries-old idea of an ashram as a refuge from worldly pursuits for personal salvation: his ashrams at Sabarmati and Sevagram were not merely places for seeking spiritual seeking but offered training in social service, rural uplift, elementary education, removal of untouchability and the practice of non-violence to future satyagrahis. His prayer meetings were held not in temples but under the open sky; they became symbols of religious harmony by including recitations from Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Parsi and Buddhist texts.

The symbols used by Gandhi in his political campaigns thus ceased to be exclusively Hindu symbols. The saintly idiom remained but its content had changed. This is what escaped the attention of Gandhi's critics One of them, M. N. Roy, who in his communist as well as radical humanist phases had been sharply critical of Gandhi's 'religious approach' to politics, confessed later that he had failed to detect the secular approach of the Mahatma beneath the religious terminology and that essentially Gandhi's message had been 'moral, humanist, cosmopolitan'.

The oft-repeated charge that Gandhi exploited religious emotion for political ends in regard to the Khilafat

movement is also based on a misreading not only of his aims and methods, but of the historical situation existing at that time, the pan-Islamic concern of Indian Muslims for Turkey and the Ottoman Caliphate, which culminated in the Khilafat movement in 1919-24, had its origin long before Gandhi stepped on the Indian political stage. He did not seek the leadership of the movement And when it accepted his guidance, he tried to moderate its romantic and fanatical overtones, and to bring it into the nationalist mainstream, but he could do so only within the limits imposed by the character of the movement and its own leadership I do not propose to deal with this subject here at length as it forms one of the major themes of my book – *Gandhi, Pan-Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism in India* (OUP, 1989)

Gandhi's message to the people of the subcontinent was loud, clear and consistent 'We must forget that we are Hindus or Sikhs or Muslims or Parsis We must be only Indians It is of no consequence by what name we call God in our homes. In the work of the nation all Indians of all faiths are one ' This message can be verified by anyone who cares to dip into the 90-odd volumes of *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* He laboured for a modern, egalitarian, multi-religious, multi-cultural state based on representative democracy Though he was deeply religious, he said that he would have opposed any proposal for a state religion, even if the whole population of India had professed the same religion

Gandhi did all he could do to assuage communal passions, and to build bridges between the communities. If he did not succeed, there were factors in the situation which even he could not control

VI

The Hindu-Muslim problem which culminated in the division of the subcontinent in 1947, long antedated Gandhi's advent on the Indian political scene. The Muslims, who constituted nearly one-fourth of the total population, differed from the Hindus in their religious tenets, usage, laws and customs; however, these differences were accepted and taken for granted by the two communities. The evolution of a common language, dress and ceremonials in different parts of India had assisted the process of mutual adjustment. The cultural and social life of the people often seemed to differ more on the regional than on religious lines

The British conquest placed the two communities on a level – of common subjection. However, in the closing decades of the 19th century, the demand of the middle classes – primarily Hindu in composition – through the Indian National Congress for a larger share in the administration of the country brought about a new orientation in the policy of the British rulers. Muslims were henceforth seen not as potential rebels (as after the rebellion of 1857) but as probable allies

To this reorientation the Muslim leader who made the greatest contribution was Sir Syed Ahmad Khan He was a pioneer in religious and social reform, but an avowed conservative in politics He exhorted his co-religionists to keep away from the Congress and indeed from politics altogether He argued that Muslims, the former rulers of India, had been the unjust victims of history, that the Hindus had stolen a march over them in education and employment, and that for the Muslims to compete with the Hindus for the public services and elective bodies was a hopeless task, that a democratic polity would give an upper hand to the Hindus, that the British Raj was preferable to possible Hindu domination

Sir Syed thus threw his powerful influence in favour of the isolation of the Muslim community from the nationalist movement just when this movement started on its career Even that great judge and nationalist leader of Bombay, Badruddin Tyabji, was so rattled by Sir Syed's anti-Congress tirade that he suggested to A O. Hume that the Congress meetings should be discontinued because of opposition from the Muslim community!

The reaction of Dadabhai Naoroji and other Congress leaders to Sir Syed's hostility was – as indicated earlier in this article – a deliberate effort to remove Muslim misgivings and fears. This effort met with limited success as Sir Syed's logic had gone down rather well with landlords, retired government servants and titled gentry who constituted the bulk of the Muslim intelligentsia. Sir Syed's words were also music to the ears of the British. In 1906, the Viceroy, Lord Minto readily conceded the demand made by deputation, headed by the Aga Khan, for separate electorates and 'weighted' representation for the Muslim community in legislatures if an elective system was introduced The British policy-makers learnt to view religious minorities in the same light as they viewed the princes and landlords; a counter-weight to the nationalist forces represented by the Congress.

For the next four decades Muslim politics revolved around the distribution of seats in legislature and jobs under the government between various communities. This constitutional arithmetic became an intractable problem because of the conflicting and irreconcilable claims of the protagonists of the various communities However, in 1916 the leaders of the Indian National Congress made a bold bid for a solution, through an agreement with the All India Muslim League which came to be known as the Lucknow Pact. Among the main architects of the Lucknow Pact were B.G. Tilak and M A Jinnah. The Congress jettisoned its fundamental principles, to which it had adhered for thirty years, and accepted separate electorates.

The Lucknow Pact was a tacit admission that the Congress had been unable to secure the allegiance of the Muslim community and needed the support of a Muslim party before it could speak on behalf of the whole country. Tilak made himself believe that the Lucknow Pact had put an and to Muslim fears and suspicions for all time Jinnah publicly rejoiced at the fact that 'a final settlement had at last been reached which sets the seal on Hindu-Muslim cooperation.'

The 'finality' of the Lucknow Pact proved a delusion The issues which were

supposed to have been resolved finally were soon to be reopened. The problem of allocating percentages of seats in legislatures and jobs under the government continued to baffle numerous 'all-parties' conclaves, but no solution emerged. One of the great obstacles in the way of the agreement was the presence of the 'third party', the British government which held in their hands all the power and patronage, and was in a position to outbid the nationalists In 1929, Jinnah, who was to virtually become the permanent president of the Muslim League, announced his Fourteen Points which incorporated all possible demands vis-a-vis the Hindu community in regard to the future constitution of India. Three years later, practically all these demands were conceded in the award of the British Prime Minister Ramsay Macdonald The Congress decision was 'neither to accept nor reject this award'; this amounted to acquiescence. But the communal problem was not solved

In 1937, Jinnah demanded coalition ministries in the provinces Three years later, he propounded his two-nation theory and insisted that Muslims as 'a separate nation' were entitled to a separate homeland of their own in the Muslim majority areas in the north-west and in the east The demand was formally embodied in a resolution passed by the Muslim League in March 1940, which came to be known as the Pakistan resolution. Until almost the last stage, however, he did not define the boundaries nor fill in the outlines of his Pakistan proposal; each of his followers was thus free to see Pakistan in his own image The outbreak of the Second World War renewed the conflict between the British government and the Indian National Congress. The resignation of the Congress ministries in eight out of eleven provinces was a god-send to the Muslim League. If the Congress ministries had remained in office the stories of atrocities against them could not have remained without challenge

The rationale of the two-nation theory was dubious, but Jinnah who had his roots in the Victorian age and grew up as a rationalist and constitutionalist in the school of Dadabhai Naoroji and Gokhale, used the dynamite of religious emotion to blast his way to political influence over his community. The cry of religion in danger, the reiteration of 'Congress Tyranny', and the imaginary spectre of Hindu Raj created a psychosis of suspicion and fear in the Muslim community. So strong was this psychosis that Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad could be portrayed and perceived as the enemies of Indian Muslims, and the Muslim voters in the Hindu majority provinces – who had nothing to gain from the Partition of the country – solidly voted for Partition in the election of 1945-46 The Muslim League won *all* the Muslim seats to the Central Assembly and 90 per cent of the seats in the provincial assemblies

Jinnah's success was due not only to his great skill and tenacity of purpose but to the tension between the Congress and the government The British were neither interested in the one-nation nor in the two-nation theory. They viewed the Congress as the main enemy; Muslim separatism was useful to them for spiking the nationalist guns. The Muslim League had no lot or part in the struggle of which Pakistan was a by-product. Others forced open the door through which Jinnah walked to his goal.

The Partition did nothing to help the religious minorities on either side, it only internationalised the problem. The vast mass of migrations across the new borders brought untold misery to millions of people

The question may well be asked: 'What about Hindu communalism?' In a mass organisation like the Indian National Congress, whose membership numbered in hundreds of thousands, there may have been and indeed were individuals, with a parochial and communal outlook, but they had no influence on the policies of the Congress which were framed by the apex leadership headed by Gandhi and Nehru, Patel and Azad There were also avowed communal organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha which were fairly vocal from the mid-twenties

The spokesmen of the Mahasabha, such as Savarkar and Moonje, were narrow-minded intemperate and even provocative in their utterances and writings which only helped to fuel Muslim communalism. But they made little headway with the politically conscious class among the Hindus This is proved by the fact that the Mahasabha could not win a single seat in any provincial legislature in the general election of 1937. It again drew a blank in the general elections of 1946. Thus during the pre-1947 period, while the Congress leadership was successful in holding the Mahasabha and Hindu communal organisations at bay, it was unable to contain the forces of Muslim communalism and separatism. The nationalist Muslim leaders included some outstanding, able and patriotic individuals but they could not carry their community with them.

VII

Sarojini Naidu, the poetess, when asked by Halide Edib; the Turkish writer who visited India in the 1930s, what the British would leave behind when they left India, replied at once: 'A nation'. (Halide Edib, *Inside India*: London, 1937). Those of us who have lived through the early years of independence would recall, despite the trauma of the Partition, the buoyant feeling of what Nehru picturesquely described as the realisation of India's 'tryst with destiny'. The incubus of foreign rule had at last been lifted and new vistas of progress had opened. In the Constituent Assembly and in the government there was even a sense of relief that the most intractable, obstructive element in the body politic which had stalled the political process for twenty years had eliminated itself. Unencumbered by the straitjackets of complicated constitutional formulae, the Constituent Assembly could at last get down to the task of framing a constitution for a democratic but viable nation-state.

For some years after independence Muslim communalism, chastened by the Partition, seemed subdued So was

Hindu communalism after incurring the odium of Gandhi's assassination The Mahatma's life-long crusade against untouchability had led to its abolition by law, and the caste-system seemed on the way out The country could at last concentrate on tasks of social and economic reconstruction

One must acknowledge that the optimism of those early years has been somewhat diluted. Nehru, with his sense of history, knew that India had undertaken a colossal task – the simultaneous pursuit of national integration, representative democracy, economic development and social justice, and that the process was going to be neither smooth nor painless It is not possible in this article, which primarily deals with the heritage of the national movement, to go into the history of the last five decades. But some of the difficulties which have arisen stemmed from the operation of the democratic process itself With adult franchise, the politicians of all hues could not resist the temptation of exploiting caste, religion and language to build their 'vote-banks'

As the stalwarts of the freedom struggle died on faded out, the political stage came to be occupied by smaller men with a vision which did not seem to extend beyond the next by-election Communalism which had been lying low reared its head again, with the added vigour of a worldwide resurgence of fundamentalism. The caste system also received a boost from purblind politicians determined to manipulate the electoral system for personal or party ends no matter what the cost. Luckily, the danger from linguistic fanaticism had been largely blunted by the reorganisation of the states under Nehru, thus providing outlets for 'sub-nationalisms' within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

The most formidable challenge to the Indian nation-state in recent years has come from political terrorism and insurgencies at the peripheries, in the Punjab and Kashmir and in the north-eastern states. These could have been nipped in the bud, if their fires had not been stoked up from across the border. In the North East, the problems of Assam have been aggravated from uncontrolled immigration from Bangladesh So far as the hill tribes are concerned we must remember that they gave as much trouble to the British in the 19th century as they are giving to independent India. For example, while Greater Assam passed into British hands in 1826 after the first Burmese War, it took the British fifty years to established physical control in Nagaland. All that the Indian state can do in the North East is to simultaneously combat terrorism, and to promote economic development in the region. Already the highest per capita central aid (next only to that of Kashmir) has gone to this region

It is not uncommon for nation-states in their early years to be confronted by forces which seek to weaken them from within, or threaten them from without. 'A Nation in Making', is how S N Banerjea, one of the great leaders of the moderate era, described the country in his autobiography published in 1925. Little did he know that twenty years later Indian nationalism would muster enough strength to liquidate the colonial rule.

However, of freedom, as of love, it is said that it has to be won every day. The same is true of nationalism Pessimists, who talk of 'India invented' or India being a 'civilization-state', underrate the heritage of the national movement and its strong roots. In moments of crisis, as in the 1962 war with China and 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan, the country stood the test. Then there are forces, visible and invisible, which bind the people of this country together and promote a pan-Indian identity; the federal and democratic constitution which gives full freedom for cultural development, a uniform legal system and a judiciary enforcing fundamental rights of every Indian citizen, a great network of rail, road and air transport, newspapers, cinema, radio, television, the administrative services and the armed forces, and above all the thousand strands which intertwine various parts of the country in trade and industry and in the vast country-wide market now reaching out to a global market.

The coward and the bully

RAMESH CHANDRA SHAH

'THE average Hindu is a coward and the average Muslim, a bully....' I wonder why these words of Mahatma Gandhi (spoken in a context I cannot remember) should suddenly bob up in my consciousness as I settle down to articulate my reactions to the demolition of the Babri Masjid. The editorial expectation is quite explicit: has the event signified some new thinking on the question of Indian nationalism and our collective identity as a nation?

One is inclined to believe it has, whatever rhetoricians and sentimentalists may say. The rhetorician deceives others: the sentimentalist himself. And it is rather difficult to avoid these traps, because they are woven into the very texture of our living and thinking. In schools and colleges, the administrative machinery, institutions and media – everything seems designed to serve and promote collective amnesia and collective bad conscience.

Indian society appears the polar opposite of what it was at the beginning of this century. Recall that Sri Aurobindo had then emphasized the urgent need to correct the imbalance created by the undue predominance of the West in the realm of ideas. Gandhi's 'Hind Swaraj' had also raised a powerful protest against what appeared to him a satanic structure; and our philosophers had passionately pleaded for a 'Swaraj in ideas'. This feeling continued through the early days of our national struggle, but the course of events since appear to have taken a different turn.

It is only towards the close of the century that we have begun to realize the need to thoroughly reevaluate our confused attitudes and actions and clear the muddle. 'Where is that sense of cohesion', we ask, 'where is that vision of a young India?' There is not one leader today who can command nation-wide respect and attention. Our political culture is at its nadir and the spiritual-religious domain too seems drained of inspiration. Political and organisational ability had seldom been our strong point; in fact, politics is a new addiction and seems to have gone to our heads. We seem condemned to witness today a rank politicization of everything – even in those spheres of life which must remain immune from it and which can maintain their creativity only when they can operate in an atmosphere of complete freedom and autonomy. The current situation reminds one of those terrible words of Yeats: 'The best lack all conviction and the worst are full of passionate intensity....' One wonders when and where things went wrong.

'We never heard anyone call it Babri Masjid' – a friend of mine once told me, recalling his childhood and boyhood spent in his native town of Ayodhya – 'it was invariably referred to as Janmasthan Masjid ' But now, thanks to the widely publicized controversy around the issue and the painstaking research that accompanied it, everybody has come to know that even the Muslim records often refer to it as *masjid-e-janmasthan*. Also, that

of the thousands of such 'converted' sites spread throughout the country, Ayodhya happens to be the one instance where the local population not only refused to accept the conversion as a *fait accompli*, continuing to offer ceremonial worship in the courtyard of this *janmasthan masjid* for generations. Of course, there are historical accounts too of some armed conflict in the middle of the 19th century, but what is important is the way the memory was kept alive through centuries – and the unique and exceptional manner of holding this plea against the rage of history, against the necessary fate of forgetting itself. It was the symbolic protest or satyagraha of a people and their civilization against the ever-present and recurrent threats of barbarism The message was unambiguous: and one wonders how it was missed or ignored so completely.

Viewed thus, the overnight induction of idols into the mosque in 1947 (?) appears to make some sense. The situation certainly called for more hindsight and foresight, delicacy and depth than the authorities could bring to it. Locking up the deity seemed the best solution to them. It is said that the Collector of Ayodhya had submitted a proposal that he could easily collect signatures of all the Muslims in Ayodhya in favour of handing over the disputed site to their Hindu brothers. It is also reported that Nehru turned down the proposal, saying that this would be improper. The question that naturally arises is Why was it improper? Considering the sensitivity of the issue, would it not have been proper for the most undisputed, most respected and most beloved leader of the Indian people at that time to take the initiative himself and to issue an appeal to Muslims to make such a gesture of goodwill towards their fellow countrymen?

Nobody could have questioned the secular credentials of Nehru's government. The only man who did so was a scholar-saint called Karpatri Maharaj, who pointed out the glaring contradiction between the haste to pass the Hindu code bill and the total unconcern towards even the idea of a common code. What sort of and democratic a secular state was it? Was it concession or denial? Was it a foretaste of the grand Orwellian design where all are equal but some are more equal than others? It is a widely known fact that, but for the intervention of the then President of India, he would have had his will even in the case of Somnath It is only today that we find ourselves wondering whether it was good historic sense or even sound commonsense on his parts to take the majority for granted and ignore altogether their religio-cultural susceptibilities and vulnerabilities?

One also wonders whether Nehru was inspired by a genuine faith in the civilizational value of unity in cultural diversity or by just a subconscious acquiescence in the theory of two nations and two people that had led to the Partition of the country. No lessons were learnt, it seems, even after having paid the cruellest cost for the timid approach and failure of nerve. Such behaviour would have been inconceivable a couple of decades ago in the heyday of the Indian nationalistic upsurge.

Seeking to achieve communal harmony through wilful suppression and distortion of historical facts is a self-defeating enterprise. But it appears to have become proper and prestigious in this country – considering the brigade of academics supporting it. Countless textbooks have repeated the blatant lie that cannot stand a moment's scrutiny. Facts stare you in the face not just in Ayodhya, but in other places of pilgrimage as well – most notably Varanasi and Mathura. Suppressing or denying such evidence discredits one in the eyes of people who have now emerged from centuries of self-oblivion, and whose innocence of history can no longer be taken for granted Whoever had heard of the Inquisition at Goa, for instance? Today everybody knows about it, along with the other realities of the imperialist-cum-missionary enterprise It just won't do to go on paying lip-service to the civilizational thrust of a non-aggressive, non-violent way of life, admitting and even encouraging on principle the widest diversity of views, ensuring an in-built secularism; and refusing to acknowledge and live by the very source of that strength at the same time. The hollowness and the hypocrisy of such cobweb attitudes cannot be concealed by inventing glib phrases and concepts as 'a composite culture', or 'a multi-national family'. They ring hollow, because neither can they explain the depth of religiosity and nor the depth of secularism. At most, they make dubious promises and lead to banning common expressions of greeting like '*Ram-Ram*' or '*Jai Ramji ki*' in the official network. They may satisfy the sentimentalist and intoxicate the rhetorician; but what do they mean to the commonest as well as the most uncommon practitioner of that living faith and culture – a peasant, for example, and to a pundit; to a Gandhi or to an Aurobindo? Surely nothing, nothing at all Then, whom do we seek to deceive in an era which has witnessed the exposure of such major scandals as the Dead Sea Scrolls deception?

Just review the series of events leading up to the event of December 1992. Just cast a retrospective glance at a few incidents that have hit the headlines in recent years: the court verdict on Shah Bano's case and the subsequent intervention of the highest power in the state to retract it; the banning of Rushdie's book even before it was banned in Pakistan itself; the related episode in Jamia Millia, involving the threat to the life of a senior professor who dared open his mouth; look at the drama often staged at the meetings of the Indian Council for Historical Research and remember the latest scene enacted at the recent Archeological Congress in Delhi What do they all point to? Some new version of the coward-bully syndrome? Or a slow transformation of it?

Why this chronic reluctance or inability to face facts as they present themselves? Why this object compulsion to be anything but ourselves? We tend to think and act in a realm of disconnection, as if there is no living continuity between the ancient and the modern or the medieval and the modern experiences of our historical existence. Do we not make

ourselves thus the willing tools and accomplices of the imperialist and the missionary bullies – enacting and perpetuating their roles ourselves Does not this lead to an effectual suspension and surrender of our own independent will and initiative to tackle our domestic problems? The communal divide continues intact and the so-called polarities are further sharpened by the very efforts that seek to reconcile or remove them.

One need not take the terms of that casual Gandhian categorization too literally; but they do make sense in a behavioural context In fact, this categorization itself was obviously meant to expose the absurdities inherent in a relationship that has been made wholly unnatural through the vagaries of history and through a self-inflicted mutual distrust But precisely because of those conditions of its genesis, it is by no means irremediable or irredeemable Only the manner we have adopted to tackle our problems is crude and cowardly. It is like continuing to feed an adult on baby food

And it is not just the slaves of the so-called secular ideologies among our intelligentsia who are responsible for this sorry state of affairs. A former prime minister availing himself of the national TV network to raise ad nauseam the daily spectre of a theocratic state, and a would-be political messiah purveying the belated wisdom of a wounded secular conscience also victims of the same delusion. Both are equally unconcerned about the civilizational perspective. Can there by any respite from such public misfortunes with their killer instinct for publicity and power in a largely indifferent and ignorant milieu that is – in a demagogue's paradise?

Mahatma Gandhi could afford to be frank and forthright in his dealings with everybody He had no use for half-measures and subterfuge His successors, however, proved unworthy of that legacy 'Proselytization is the deadliest sin that has sapped the very foundations of truth', he once told a group of missionaries. He had no illusions about their real motives although he appreciated their valuable contributions to the amelioration of human misery. Did he have any illusions about others? No; whatever one may think of the movements he launched, there is internal evidence to prove that he did not think and act in terms of appeasing the bully and making room for the coward After all, he was dealing with the very real insider and not with imaginary outsiders. He identified himself with the bully and chose to walk naked through the dusty and bloody corridors of history to redeem his conscience and his people. He had no illusions about the Hindu intelligentsia either. 'Hard-hearted' was the phrase he specially reserved for them It is fair to say that he came to exhaust the limits of Hindu patience and tolerance in his own person and courted martyrdom in the process Time and again he reminded his audience that he was a follower of the *Sanatan dharma*; his sheet anchor was the faith of his ancestors He and Sri Aurobindo – apparently his political adversary – are complementary aspects of the same tradition of the religion of the self, the same common sense of the soul

When and where then did things go wrong?

Somewhere, somehow, a betrayal of that vision of 'Young India', opened up by men like Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi seems to have taken place Somewhere, somehow we do appear to have forsaken that path and followed another – the path of the least resistance, dictated by expediency rather than the urge for self-realization Who could have foreseen such lack of political will, such abject compromises, such failure of nerve and such proliferation of crises?

But why not? Had not there been signs of confusion and cowardice right from the beginning? The novelist E.M. Forster, who found Hinduism rather incomprehensible but most profound among the world religions, had, during his second visit in 1925, observed with deep dismay that 'Indian intellectuals thought of nothing except politics; they hardly ever cared about economic and cultural issues and had no vision at all of national reconstruction '

'Our hard-hearted intelligentsia,' Gandhiji once observed, 'has been a constant nightmare to me.' It is this hard-hearted and soft-brained intelligentsia then, which may be held responsible for the chaos that prevails today. They were hardly receptive to Aurobindo and for all the lip-service to Gandhi, they were never really with him. The philosopher K.C. Bhattacharya had characterized these intellectuals as shadow-minds who had buried their native soul within themselves and were content to live and act in an eternity of second-hand 'Swaraj in ideas' – that was his prescription for national regeneration. He, too, was consigned to oblivion.

It would be foolish to thrust the whole responsibility for our tragic deviation on one particular leader Of course, the dialectical challenge of the West had to be faced and coped with: there could be no easy way out. But hadn't our most nationalistic and, at the same time, most visionary leaders taken all that into account? It was after all the patriot who pointed out the 'foundations of Indian Culture', and gave a resounding reply to the biased outsiders, who evolved into the sage, who wrote *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*. Wasn't this mind at once the most Indian and the most universal? The values that the Mahatma struggled to exemplify and enact in his own life and action are similarly centrally related to that holistic Hindu vision of life, which has a universal appeal and relevance.

In fact, these two complementary representatives of our tradition now appear to have been more radically and responsibly transformative of the human condition than Marx and Nietzsche – their European counterparts True to that inheritance, Gandhi had declined to reduce his lifetime's work into what they call a clear-cut and well-defined ideology Similarly, the luminous and lucid thought of Sri Aurobindo too yields its significance only to those who achieve a certain inwardness with his praxis, his *sadhana*. Life is too complex and mysterious to be

capable of being reduced to a logical process. Reductionism and hatred-driven ideologies characterize our times. But our modern sages, so free from intellectual arrogance in their approaches to reality, cannot be reduced to a mere ideology.

So, Indian civilization, in spite of its lapses and loss of confidence, had indeed accepted the great dialectical challenge of the West on its own terms. Fifty years after independence, we are painfully learning the lesson that it is not enough to have had great leaders. It is the people as a whole – the average who have to raise themselves in moral and mental stature to be able to emulate such exemplars. There has to be a responsible and alert intelligentsia to bridge the yawning gulf between the sage and the masses. Obviously it is our intelligentsia that has failed to build the bridge and fulfil this role.

Let us remember that there have been several signs of conflict in the modern Indian mind. This was reflected in the controversy that had arisen between Tagore and Gandhi, Gandhi and Aurobindo, and Gandhi and Nehru. Sadly, the last and most crucial of these dialogues was abruptly broken off by Nehru himself. Was it a marriage of incompatibles, foredoomed to failure from the very beginning? It is difficult to judge by hindsight. Perhaps Nehru was Gandhi's anti-self (alter ego) or creative mask, just as the West in general appears to be India's anti-self and creative mask. Clearly, Gandhi must have felt some elective affinity with Nehru. After all, the great leader of the masses had to come to terms with the leader of our divided and shadowy intelligentsia Hadn't the himself declared his preference for independent personalities than mere loyal followers? 'The traditionalism of Indian civilization', Milton Singer observes, 'is not opposed to innovation and change, to modernity, to the foreign and the strange.' Indian society has displayed a unique in-built resistance as well as resilience through the ages. Herein lies an interesting paradox: perhaps no people in the world community have shown such a sympathetic understanding of the West as the Indians; yet, at the same time, no people seem to have offered it such resistance at the deeper levels.

So, in spite of the drift and disorientation, the omnipresent corruption and neglect of work-ethic, the optimistic view of an outsider like V.S. Naipaul – otherwise one of our severest critics – does not seem unwarranted. It is easy to achieve quick results with a homogeneous people accustomed to more or less coercive regimes, who can combine feudal loyalties with modern technological requirement. But the problem, the task of forging a modern unity and identity out of such complex diversity and plurality as we have fostered in our land is incomparably more challenging.

'Each religion has helped mankind,' says Sri Aurobindo. 'Paganism increased in man the light of beauty; Christianity gave him some vision of divine love and charity; Judaism and Islam taught him how to be religiously faithful in action and zealously devoted to God. Hinduism has opened to him the largest and the profoundest of spiritual possibilities. A great thing would be done if all the God-visions could embrace and cast themselves into each other; but intellectual dogma and cult-egoism stand in the way.'

Apparently, the life of Aurobindo himself as well as that of Mahatma Gandhi would appear to have been dedicated to precisely those possibilities. Gandhiji too had to contend, in his own way, with the same obstacles of dogmatism and cult-egoism. He too might have similarly expressed himself. That indeed is the destiny or the historic role which India as a nation-state or civilization state (whatever you choose to call it), would appear to be called upon to fulfil. India has to develop, therefore, into a strong, self-confident and self-reliant country to be able to fulfil this civilizational role, and realize the meaning of its existence among the world family of nations. To express it in this manner is certainly not to say that 'India is a multi-national family'. No Let us beware of the traps that the ever-busy sentimentalists and rhetoricians have prepared for us.

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Interview

Qurratulain Hyder writes both in English and Urdu. She is the recipient of several prestigious awards for her contribution to Indian literature, including the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1967 and the Gyanpeeth Puraskar in 1991. She was interviewed by **Bharat Wariavwalla** and **Ira Pande** in Delhi.

A roadside graffiti that appeared en route Advani's rath yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in the autumn of 1990 read 'Ram drohi, desh drohi' The graffiti could have been the epigraph of the Ayodhya agitation for it made Ram a symbol of Hindu nationalism, a kind of Hindu Bismarck, the builder of the Hindu nation. This wasn't Ram as purushottam, as Gandhi saw him. How do you see all this?

The whole thing was hardsell political propaganda. Till this agitation broke out, no one had heard of the Babri mosque or thought that its presence represented an assault on Hindu religious sensibilities. No one cares for history, documents or archaeology; 'Babur the invader' is made out to be a monster. The fact that he invaded the Lodhi Sultanate and vanquished a Muslim king is completely ignored. I remember visiting Ayodhya as a schoolgirl in 1941. There was a platform called *Sitaji ki rasoi*—some sadhus sat around it and there were a few people near the mosque. It was utterly peaceful and picturesque. I remember the cool shade of the tree and the restful atmosphere.

According to Prince Anjum Qadr, the great-grandson of Wajid Ali Shah, who now lives in Calcutta, Col. Sleeman wanted to create problems for the highly popular king of Avadh so that he could be deposed. The British Resident asked a Buddhist astrologer to prove, on the basis of false calculations, that Ramchandraji had been born on the exact spot where the Babri Masjid stood.

Often in history a thing or an event that is insignificant at one time acquires great significance at another. History has often been imagined. For example, most Hungarians did

not know that their nation was born in AD 896 until the late 19th century patriots told them so The December 1992 event too has acquired great political significance. How do you see it?

I personally do not think that this event has any great significance Quite a few dozen mosques were demolished in 1947 in and around Delhi and converted into temples and gurdwaras – nobody bothered. This demolition has been blown out of all proportion, obviously for political reasons But it is the idea of avenging the 'thousand' year Muslim rule by removing or demolishing the masjid that I find very upsetting.

Is this an assertion of Hindu nationalism?

Certainly. It is upsetting that some Hindu nationalist and religious persons should now play up this issue Do you know that the Nawab Viziers and the kings of Avadh had banned the killing of monkeys in deference to Hanumanji? Muslim actors participated in Ram Lila plays. (One such actor still lives in Lucknow.) They had given lands and money for lighting up temples, lighting up *diyas* in the temples of Ayodhya and Kashi. Bismillah Khan, for instance, played the *shehnai* in the temple and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan sang *bhajans* inside the Sanctum Sanctorum ... but no one wants to remember that The other day I saw this huge citadel of Tughlak's, it is falling to pieces. The gopuram of an ancient temple in South India was painted a screaming blue and I expressed my anguish at this cultural vandalism, in a meeting of the Lalit Kala Akademi.

For me the demolition of the mosque is sad because pulling down places of worship was an ancient and medieval wartime practice Even at the time of Partition, there was not this engineered hatred that you find today. And this is because of a campaign of total brainwashing. Muslims are being made scapegoats and held responsible for everything that has gone wrong with India.

But it enjoys great popular support

Of course, because somewhere it struck a chord in the Hindu psyche When the proponents of Hindutva say the Muslims broke 30,000 Hindu temples they are believed How did they count these 30,000 temples? A friend of mine, Lala Maheshwar Dayal, who was the finest example of the composite Hindu-Muslim cultural unity...told me that the Hindus say that 30,000 temples were destroyed

Do you believe that it is the lack of modernization among the Muslims that today has become an important factor in the aggravation of Hindu-Muslim relations? Many see the Muslims frozen in religious orthodoxy, the reigning image is that of a modernized Hindu against a poor, traditional Muslim

Muslims are partly responsible for their present predicament. In the Islamic world, they took up the symbol of Islam to fight back the colonising West. Even though in countries like Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Algeria there were secular processes at work, in India it is in the name of religion that ultimately the independence struggle was waged. In the name of religion, Jinnah argued for two nations, probably without any religious conviction on his part and he took up the cause of Islam as a legal brief The moment he got Pakistan, he said no more Hindus and Muslims but it was too late.

There were a large number of Muslim leaders in the nationalist as well as the revolutionary movements. Umar Sobhan, the cotton king of Bombay, was turned into a pauper by the British Government when they brought down the price of Manchester cotton overnight in order to punish him because he had financed the Indian National Congress. A large number of Muslim revolutionaries ascended the gallows Many set up a Free India Government in Kabul in 1916. Others died in exile. Maulana Hasrat Mohani was the first to demand complete Swaraj They gave slogans like *Inquilab Zindabad* to the Indian people The Muslim League was revived only in 1937. Unfortunately, Muslims like Maulana Azad, who said, 'I see no clash between myself as a Muslim and as an Indian,' have all been completely forgotten today. See, Britain is Christian and English at the same time – there is no clash. The Muslims in the last 50 years in India have largely gone into their shell. It makes matters worse when a Muslim is told that if he says his prayers five times a day, he is a fundamentalist.

Is it possible that the way secularism has been preached and practised here since independence that is largely responsible for the social backwardness of the Muslims? For instance, one could say in the name of secularism the Indian state reformed Hinduism (the Hindu Code bill) but allowed the Muslim religious orthodoxy to flourish. The state was laissez-faire when it came to Islam; in effect it said to the Muslims that it would give them all the protection they want, but it won't spur them, as it spurred the Hindus, into undertaking religious reforms. Is this a plausible explanation?

Yes, to an extent, although the reform movement and the women's emancipation began more than a hundred years ago in India and achieved some success. In the early years of this century the sari was a symbol of modernity for Muslim women Muslim women had acquired their own press in 1898, they published their own magazines. There was this sense of being one with the rest of the Indian women in their struggle for emancipation.

How would you react to the proposition of a leading western scholar like Sir Bernard Lewis that there is a fundamental incompatibility between Islam and modernity?

No, this is a Eurocentric view of Islam. Sir Bernard is Jewish. In Judaism, you must not do any work on the Sabbath and the orthodox Jews in Israel practise that. They are not called fundamentalists and nobody in the West says

that Judaism is incompatible with modernism. Islam has always got bad press in the West and now in India. Unfortunately, the extremism of Khomeini in Iran, of Saudi Arabia, the fatwa against Salman Rushdie and the Shah Bano case in India, have all contributed to the strengthening of this negative image. It is wrong to think that Muslims in India are frozen in religious orthodoxy. For example, ten years ago, eight departments in Aligarh University were headed by Muslim women. It is the stereotype of the burqa-clad woman we have drawn up in our minds that comes in the way of our understanding the real situation. The extremist attitudes of both Hindus and Muslims have turned into a vicious circle. Some years ago, when a Muslim girl became the captain of the Aligarh University's famous riding club, the increasingly influential Jamaatis agitated against it.

When we say that Muslims are not in the mainstream, what do we mean by that? What is the mainstream? There are Muslims in sports, in music, literature, education, politics, journalism, in the arts, entertainment industry, in handicraft. Muslim children have been learning Hindi for the last 50 years. What else is the mainstream?

What difference do you see in today's Delhi and the Delhi of 50 years ago?

The last Mughal prince was asked this question on Doordarshan in 1975. His answer was: '*Pehla khane juda juda the, dil ek the; Ab dil alagh alagh hain, khane ek hain.*'

Ayodhya is a clear watershed, for what happened there was a violent manifestation of a process that has been at work for quite some time: the urbanised, mobile, middle-class Hindus need the image of a belligerent Muslim community at home in league with the Islamic fundamentalist abroad to maintain their solidarity. 'We against they' is the image on which all nationalist ideologies are constructed and Hindutva is no exception.

I think this is also tied up with the global market.

Unless you understand your religion the more defensive you become because of the fear of losing it.

One thing I have not been able to understand is that the *baniya* community of say Delhi or U.P., – are in the forefront of the BJP. These are the people who for centuries have had the closest market relations with the Muslims. It is to them that the Muslims mortgage their properties and borrowed money.

Why is there such a deep hostility between the two communities today?

I think it is the press, the media and the lack of communication between the two communities.

No, that is only part of the larger story. The real problem is the Muslim leadership The kind of people who today speak for the Muslims, say Syed Shahabuddin or Imam Bukhari, are seen by many Hindus as religious bigots and it is this perception that deepens the divide between them. There is no liberal Muslim leadership today; there are no Kidwais or Azads.

The whole point is unless a new leadership comes up, what do we do? People like Kidwai belonged to the pre-Partition era, nurtured by Gandhian ideals. Look at the Tyabji family – *vo* breed *khatam ho gayi hai.*

The feudal elite was wiped out. The Nizam of Hyderabad had long been sending Muslim women of his state for higher studies to England. (Sarojini Naidu was also one of the recipients of the Nizam's scholarship.) After Partition, most of the enlightened Muslim middle class migrated to Pakistan. The poorer section and the unlettered artisans were left behind. They had no leaders and the mullahs took over. A new middle class is slowly emerging but they have become part of the new mindless consumerist society. The Babri Masjid Action Committee is alleged to have made a lot of money out of that game-plan.

The Hindu-Muslim myth is distorted both ways. You think of a type, not an individual. It is easy to say I am an individual, not a type, but does this distinction always hold in a trying situation? In the troubled times in which we live today, people all too readily identify each other as types and not as individuals. All small identities derived from belonging to a common neighbourhood, village, trade or profession get subsumed under one grand religious identity at times of strife and conflict.

There are many Hindus of strong and liberal persuasion who still believe a Muslim is firstly a member of the Umma and then only a member of the national community; some even question whether a Muslim can be a national of a nation that is not Muslim or Islamic.

Absolute nonsense. Umma is a term first popularised in Pakistan by Zia-ul-Haq, who was inspired by Saudi Arabia. It is a very vague term, largely used by the Jamaat-e-Islami press. In day-to-day life, you see, a Muslim is basically attached to his family, his *mohalla*, his village, his town. He is proud of his Hindustani *tehzeeb*. He has nurtured this rich, broad-based tehzeeb for centuries, therefore he finds the new philosophy of Hindutva quite unfair It is ironic that the upholders of Hindutva are using the language of the Muslim League's two-nation theory. We are living in an age of global extremism and violence: the Middle East, the IRA in the West and nearer home, the LTTE. Even Buddhist monks have become militant. I saw a poster a few years back in London's Hyde Park – a fierce-looking Muslim brandishing his sword. The caption read 'Anti-Christ'. So that horrid Muslim warrior has replaced the Communist bogey-man. Here in India, high-pitched propaganda has made the Muslim '*Babur ki aulad*'. The whole scenario is very frightening.

Of nations and nationalism

CHRISTOPHE JAFFRELOT

THE quest for models explaining the emergence of nationalism constitutes a recent and particularly active sub-discipline of political science. Till World War II, this subject had been monopolised by historians who were bent on tracing its characteristics by means of narrative and comparison (Shafer, 1964) or through typologies, as done by Hans Kohn and Carlton Hayes. However, from the 1950s, models taking recourse to the tools used by political sociology (such as statistics, first utilised in this field by Karl Deutsch) found favour in the Anglo-Saxon world, and since then, the literature on this subject has become incessantly more abundant and more diverse in Great Britain and in the United States.

To organise these numerous theories and to convey the arguments put forward by their proponents, we will proceed to group them around three paradigms – modernisation in economic and technical terms, permanence of ethnic groups and construction of ideologies – whose complementarity will be suggested in the concluding section of the article.

I: *Modernisation and Nationalism*: The theories analysed under this head have the characteristic of giving pride of place to the processes of modernisation when explaining nationalism. 'Modernisation' and 'nationalism', in this context, hold a meaning specific to this paradigm: the former refers to the social transformations brought about by material (economic and technological) changes and the latter stands primarily not for an ideology but rather for a new sentiment associated with modernisation and which leads the population in question to recognise itself as belonging to a single 'nation'.

A) The 'Nation-building' school

1. *The cybernetic variant*: In a pioneering piece of work done in 1953 (we are using its 1969 reprint), K. Deutsch expressed his anxiety to undertake anew the study of nationalism which historians, mistakenly according to him, classified as being a 'simple "state of mind" with no tangible causes' (Deutsch, 1969, p. 16). These not only exist but are quantifiable. Hence his project of forming 'a model which will fit the known facts and facilitate some prediction and control of events' (Ibid., p. 86).

Placing himself in a cybernetic perspective, K. Deutsch postulates that 'A larger group of persons linked by such complementary habits (such as division of labour) and facilities of communication we may call a people' (Ibid., p. 96). Following this logic, we can in fact explain or predict the formation of a nation in terms of the degree of cohesion of a society-culture, measurable on the basis of the level of development of its communication networks. For while, according to the 'functional definition of nationality' given by K Deutsch, this latter 'consists in the ability to communicate of effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large groups than with outsiders' (Ibid., p. 97), this ability can be acquired; the size of a nation and its cohesion are even directly a function of the degree of advancement of this learning. This can be evaluated by means of several indicators of which the author supplies us a list, at the top of which we find the speed of urbanisation, the level of the active population in the secondary and tertiary sectors, the number of newspaper readers, of students, migrants, people connected by post etc for all these are signs testifying to a degree of 'social mobilisation', that is to say, to an integration into networks of communication that are more dense than those of traditional societies.

The analysis made by K. Deutsch is indeed built on the opposition between traditional and industrial societies, the transition from the former to the latter involving an increased 'mobilisation of society'. (Ibid., p. 188).

[4] This translation by S Butani was funded by the Centre de Sciences Humaines

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2 *Criticisms and supplementary elements*. The first major reservation that K. Deutsch's model gives rise to, concerns the absence of reference to a national sentiment outside of its institutional (the state) or 'material' manifestations (a road network, communication by means of a single language, and so on), all of which can form, in the reasoning of Karl Deutsch, the condition of, and then the vehicle for, a national consciousness, but from which we cannot infer its nature.

The work done by Benedict Anderson (based largely on the processes of communication) furnishes, from this point of view, a useful complement to that of Karl Deutsch as testified by his notion of 'print-capitalism'. Novels and newspaper writing indeed involve a concept of time in which events get organized in accordance with a sequential, chronological logic The reader finds himself placed in a specific period of time and within a certain culture in which he observes characters playing their roles following a linear axis of time; now, this is the very same situation in which man finds himself when studying his nation, which constitutes, in the same way, an abstract entity, whose criteria are the roots fixed in the past, the straining towards the future and the basic identity across this time 'The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history An American will never meet or even knows the names of more than a handful of his 240 million odd fellow Americans [. .] But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity ' (Anderson, 1983, p 31).

Besides, the development of the press gives the feeling of belonging to an 'imaginary community' by arousing among the newspapers readers the same thoughts at the same time among members of a national culture whose borders are marked out on the basis of language (Ibid , p. 39)

This characterisation of national sentiment as a mental fact underlying the development of the means of mass communication, can complement the cybernetic model of K Deutsch in which little was said about the nature and the origin of national consciousness.

The main criticism against K. Deutsch relates, however, to his conviction that modernisation will lead to the disappearance of ethnic peculiarities and the assimilation of minority groups into the dominant group: the members of the peripheral groups which participate in social mobilisation will be forced to accept the cultural modes of the dominant group, even if only to take part in the division of labour practised in the urban areas.

In a later text, K. Deutsch even defines the stages through which the process of national construction is supposed to take place 'Open or latent resistance to political amalgamation into a common national state; minimal integration to the point of passive compliance with the orders of such an amalgamated government; deeper political integration to the point of active support for such a common state but with continuing ethnic or cultural group cohesion and diversity; and, finally, the coincidence of political amalgamation and integration with the assimilation of all groups to a common language and culture – these could be the main stages on the way from tribes to nation [...] How long does it take for tribes or other ethnic groups in a developing country to pass through some such sequences of stages? We do not know, but European history offers at least a few suggestions.' (Deutsch, 1963, p. 7-8).

The reservations that this vision gives rise to are mainly of two kinds: on the one hand, the author indulges in teleological ethnocentrism by assuming that such specific ethnic groups as African tribals must follow the same process of national integration as the nation-states of Europe; on the other hand, some authors have shown that 'Advance in communications and transportation tend also to increase the cultural awareness of the minorities by making their members more aware of the distinctions between themselves and others ' (Connor, 1972, p. 329). W. Connor cites the example of Thailand where 'modernisation', by making some tribals aware of their specificity, has led to numerous separatist movements. Connor also applies his reasoning to some countries of Europe such as Great Britain where minorities such as the Scots may have acquired a collective consciousness only from the time when modernisation reached a critical threshold, endangering and simultaneously revealing their identity.

Connor concludes that the proponents of 'Nation-building' have tended to consider the state as the natural framework of the nation, which was thus entitled to benefit from a transfer of allegiance to the detriment of 'community feelings', 'regionalisms', and so on, whereas these latter constituted the real nationalisms.

Ernest Gellner had anticipated the criticisms of W. Connor by assigning a value to ethnicity and the inter-ethnic conflicts related to modernisation, this reaction to the irenicism of the proponents of 'Nation-building' coming moreover within the scope of a more general process noticed by G. Stokes in 1978: 'Recently, [...] it has become obvious that, far from bringing assimilation, mobilization has intensified ethnic awareness. Scholars have therefore started to approach the study of nationalism via a new route, ethnicity' (Stokes, 1978, p. 158).

It is, in fact, the value assigned to the socio-ethnic conflict within the framework of economic, cultural and political modernisation which is to be found at the basis of Gellner's approach.

B) Modernisation and conflicts:

1. *The model of Ernest Gellner*: The first facet of this model fits into the framework of the 'Transition' from traditional societies to industrial societies; the former, described as agrarian societies, witness a strict division between, on one side, the categories of those who are lettered and govern, who, by reason of their

power and their literacy, have access to a 'high culture', and, on the other side, the mass of those who work on the land and who merely bear a little tradition (Gellner, 1983, pp. 10-11). Over and above this cultural dichotomy, we observe a 'cultural differentiation' which is particularly strong among peasant circles on account of the autarchical mode of life of communities. This cultural heterogeneity constitutes the main obstacle to the formation of a nation

The emergence of the industrial society goes on to promote a cultural homogenisation at the end of a long process rooted in the economic logic of this society: based on an evolutive technology and the idea of progress, it involves a permanent growth of the benefits of productivity, this results on the social plane, in the necessity for extreme professional mobility, hence a versatility which implies the presence of a solid general training, which in any case is necessary for players in the new, much finer than earlier, division of labour

Thus, 'the level of literacy and technical competence, in a standardized medium, a common conceptual currency, which is required of members of this society if they are to be properly employable and enjoy full and effective moral citizenship, is so high that it simply *cannot* be provided by the kin or local units, such as they are It can only be provided by something resembling a modern "national" educational system' (Ibid , p 34).

The process of national construction thereafter progresses in accordance with the rate of the entry into the educational system, of populations living more and more in the outlying areas, which have understood that learning the dominant language and possessing a general training, are the prerequisites to their social ascent and their ability to defend their rights vis-a-vis the authorities For E Gellner, 'Nationalism is *not* the awakening of an old, latent, dormant, force, though that is how it does indeed perceive itself. It is in reality the consequence of a new form of social organisation, based on deeply internalized education-dependent high cultures, each protected by its own state' (Ibid., p. 48).

If the minimal size of a nation is thus found defined by the minimal scale of an efficient educational apparatus, its maximal size is a function of socio-ethnic conflicts. This second facet of the model was primarily formalised by Gellner in *Thought and Change*. In this book, he explains secessionist nationalisms by the fact that 'sometimes, [. .] it seems or *is* advantageous to set up a rival "nation" of one's own instead.' (Gellner, 1964, p. 165).

He considers here the case of an uneven distribution of economic resources across the territory of a state. A people, 'B', originating from a deprived region, goes on to migrate towards the more developed zones where an ethnic group, 'A', anxious to conserve the monopoly of its privileged situation, exercises discrimination towards 'B', putting forward as a pretext its racial or cultural inferiority. The members of group 'B' – who have migrated or remained in their region – find themselves in a critical situation. '. . their discontent can find "national" expression the privileged are manifestly different from themselves, even if the shared "nationality" of the under-privileged men from B starts off from a purely negative trail, that is, shared exclusion from privilege and from the "nation" of the privileged. Moreover, the men from B now do have leaders their small intellectual class probably cannot easily pass into A, and even if they can, it now has an enormous incentive not to do so; if it succeeds in detaching B-land, by the rules of the new national game, in which intellectuals are not substitutable across frontiers, it will have a virtual monopoly of the desirable posts in the newly independent B-land' (Ibid., p. 167) For E Gellner, it is in these situations that 'culture, pigmentation, etc., become important they provide means of exclusion for the benefit of the privileged, and a means of identification, etc., for the underprivileged [.] Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness it invents nations where they do not exist – but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if, as indicated, they are purely negative' (Ibid , p. 168).

The role of the intelligentsia is obviously central in the process of nation-building according to the model evolved by Gellner (Ibid., p 169).

2. *Criticism*: W. Connor protested against the interpretation of nationalism from the perspective of the economist, in terms of ethno-social conflicts; in an article directed partly against E. Gellner, he shows that nationalist movements can appear independently of any economic discrimination: do not the Catalans, the Malays, the Croatians and the Slovenes enjoy from this point of view, a privileged situation? (1984, p. 4). However, this objection is somewhat unsatisfactory because uneven development – a key element of Gellner's approach – remain central in these kinds of separatism.

The criticism directed by A.D. Smith against E. Gellner over the first section of his model enters into a different perspective; A.D. Smith criticises him for taking into consideration, from among the 'pre-modern' agrarian societies, only the ' aristocratic ethnic groups' in which the culture at the apex hardly penetrates beyond the category of the lettered and those who govern. He underlines, by way of contrast, the existence in history of 'demotic ethnic groups' in which 'a single ethnic culture permeates in varying degrees most strata of the population, even if its base remains urban and outlying rural areas exhibit local variants of the culture' (Smith, 1986, p. 77) This cultural homogeneity arises out of the fact that these peoples consider themselves as 'chosen' in one way or another: '...in the more demotic types of *ethnie* the missionary and sacred aspect is part of their defining 'essence'. Hence their ability to mobilize powerful sentiment of attachment and self-sacrificing action on behalf of the community. Hence, too, the often important role played by charismatic leaders and holy men who are felt to embody the unique characteristic of the whole community' (Ibid., p. 83).

The examples given by A.D Smith to illustrate this type of ethnic group are notably the city-States and Amphyctions (Sumer, Phoenicia, Greece) and the tribal confederations (Turkish, Persian, Mongols).

These developments enter naturally within the scope of the framework of A D Smith's efforts to show that nationalism has ethnic antecedents prior to the modern period This 'perennialist' approach partly overlaps with two paradigms: the first reducing nations to 'given' ethnic groups, the second examining the ideological reinterpretation of these latter.

II. *The Nation As A 'Given'*: The main wager of the debates between 'modernists' and 'primordialists' consists in deciding whether the ethnic group is a 'given' or a construction. For the former, it is, at least partially, a construction (resulting from the pursuit of an interest from the perspective of the last school we have considered above) According to Gellner, 'Men do not become nationalists from sentiment or sentimentality, atavistic or not, well-based or myth-founded they become nationalists through genuine, objective, practical necessity, however obscurely recognised' (Gellner, 1964, p 160), such as that of finding a job, which drives them to integrate into the educational system

The position of the 'primordialists' is naturally the reverse.

E Shils was the first to outline this theoretical position (Shils, 1957) finally formalised by Clifford Geertz (Geertz, 1963), at stake here is the contradiction between the features of a modern society (material progress, social reforms, civic culture and so on) and the vitality of the 'primordial bonds' (Geertz, 1963, p 109), bonds of blood, race, language, region, religion, custom. The pessimism of this current, in contrast to the optimism of the proponents of 'Nation-building', arose out of the irreducible character that these cultural and physical 'givens', particularly in the case of 'young nations', presented for the 'primordialists'. 'Though it can be moderated, this tension between primordial sentiments and civil politics probably cannot be entirely dissolved The power of the "givens" of place, tongue, blood, looks, and way-of-life to shape an individual's notion of who, at bottom, he is and with whom, indissolubly, he belongs is rooted in the nonrational foundations of personality' (Ibid , p. 128).

It was not long before the 'primordialist' approach was denounced for its 'fixity' by some writers who underlined the unsettled nature of ethnic identity while referring generally to cultural facts – such as confrontation with the Other – which distinguishes them from the theories of conflict drawing their inspiration from materialism

F. Barth, known particularly for his work on the Pathans, appears in this field as a pioneer to the extent to which he was among the first to want to demonstrate that 'The human material organised within an ethnic group is not immutable' (Barth, p. 21) but is defined more in terms of a 'border' susceptible to numerous variations in time. These can respond to cultural and ecological logics (changes in activity, such as sedentarisation, can end up by modifying ethnic identity) or to social motives (such as the phenomena of acculturation involved in the crossing over from one social status to another, for a group or an individual). Th ese mutations or 'migrations' do not however lead to any truly cultural synthesis, the ethnic border remaining an indispensable dividing line between 'them' and 'us', even if the demographic composition and the cultural content of these two categories change. The development of this dichotomy, which Barth, adopting a long term perspective, places at the basis of ethnic identity as a phenomenon of differentiation, has been formulated from the point of view of the study of nationalisms (and not only of ethnicity) by other writers such as W. Connor, as being at the origin of the concept of 'ethno-nationalism'

W. Connor on his part also criticises the proponents of primordialism for attributing to ethnicity a 'primitiveness [which], as in the case of *tribalism*, implies that it will wither away as modernization progresses' (Connor, 1978, p. 391); but the ethnic conflicts of European countries testify to the permanence of the phenomenon. He refutes particularly the identification of a nation on the basis solely of its 'primordial' manifestations·

> 'Any nation, of course, has tangible characteristics and, once recognized, can therefore be described in tangible terms The German nation can be described in terms of its numbers, its religious composition, its language, its location, and a number of other concrete factors. But none of these elements is of necessity, essential to the German nation. The essence of the nation [. .] is a matter of self-awareness or self-consciousness.' (Ibid., p. 389).

W. Connor does not consider, as does E. Gellner, that conflict between two ethnic groups is indispensable to the awakening of their awareness that they constitute nations – a mere cultural contact is sufficient. According to him ethnic groups are simply nations in a latent state and therefore he suggests a view of the nation as the end product of a cycle whose origin is to be sought in the ethnic group and the catalyst in cultural contacts. This theoretical framework, in a way, heralds the work by A.D. Smith entitled *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* which agreed with the 'perennialist' perspective while refusing 'primordialism' as it interpreted nationalism as an ideological construction.

III. *Nationalism As An Ideological Phenomenon*: Nationalism has hardly appeared to us, till now, as possessing the traits of an ideological force – when it did don this characteristic, it was, at best, as the result of, or the justification for, 'material' processes. In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, A.D. Smith, devoting one half of his work to the 'ethnic communities of the pre-modern eras' and the other to the age of nations, develops the thesis according to which nations emerge out of ethnic groups which, through myth and symbol, supply to the former a deter-

mined but malleable identity. However, the passage from ethnic group to nation was primarily analysed in the last chapter of *Theories of Nationalism* (1971).

At the base of his theory lies the impact of the modern concept of the 'Scientific State' which is defined by the will to 'homogenise the population within its boundaries for administrative purposes' (Smith, 1971, p 231).

The future intelligentsia receiving, in the framework of the Scientific State and after a traditional socialisation, a western education, finds itself in an ambivalent situation. Three attitudes are possible in the face of this psychological difficulty

The reaction of the traditionalists, the foremost of these being the priestly hierarchy and the traditional aristocracies or ruling classes faced with a threat to their functions, will consist in rejecting the science of the modern State (Ibid , p 241) On the political level, this option is expressed through a militant hostility to western innovations in the name of holy tradition

The attitude of the 'assimilationists' is equally clear-cut the Scientific State having 'rendered the Gods powerless', allegiance has to be transferred to this source of authority that is pragmatic and effective in material terms (Smith, 1971, p. 242) Science also gave a new meaning to life the promise of an infinite progress on earth made it less necessary to call on divine protection and to seek for a metaphysical significance to the world This attitude went hand in hand with a new universalist vision of the world.

The reformist assumes, as against the other currents of the intelligentsia, the duality of the sources of authority with which he is confronted, but seeks to reconcile them He succeeds first in doing so thanks to a 'providential deism' according to which god guides man towards his salvation through work The advent of this new era is however found conditioned by a reform of religious culture and of tradition (Ibid., p 246) That is why the reformists endeavour to seek the essence of their religion to discover the criteria of reform and eliminate all that, in the past, was not at the basis of their religion In their quest, they proceed to a return to the sources of their tradition which turns them into 'revivalists'. The revivalist 'discovers' or rather invents 'an idealised past age, into which he reads all his aspirations for a future which will embody prized and "unique" communal virtues.' (Ibid, p. 248). This inflexion is not however spiritual in nature but in fact marks the start of secularisation of this school of thought insofar as it gives rise to comparisons 'between ages of the history of the community and between the tradition of "my" community at various times, and that of other communities. The periods of religious greatness are increasingly measured by the secular criterion of worldly success' (Ibid., p 249).

The position of the 'assimilationists' evolves in such a way as to converge with the reformists turned 'revivalists' Impelled at first by the ' "messianic" belief in the advent of a cosmopolitan world, free of oppression and injustice, because of the triumph of reason and science' (Ibid., p. 252), the 'assimilationist' is disappointed when he becomes aware of the fact that the vocation of the Scientific State was to institutionalise the national entities in the form of the Nation-State.

A.D. Smith deduces the emergence of nationalism from the fusion of the 'reformist-revivalist' and 'assimilationist' inputs. It is therefore a model of ideological construction in which the external influence only sets in motion a process of cultural recasting whose motive force is the reformist-revivalist current.

Conclusion (For 'a vertical integration' of the theories of nationalisms).

Despite the fact that the authors reviewed in this article often present their theories as incompatible. it is possible to articulate them within a kind of meta-model of nationalism.

In *The Ethnic Revival*, A.D.Smith completes the analysis of his three currents by underlining the link that exists between the groups that are the driving forces of this ethnic nationalism: 'If the intellectuals are the spearhead of the ethnic revival, the professional intelligentsia form its habitual infantry' (Ibid., p 108) This, made up basically of administrators, will subscribe all the more willingly to the nationalist message of the intellectuals as its social ascent within the state bureaucracy is blocked by an elite belonging to another community – in the colonial context for instance – and the ethnic group, recognizing the technical competence of 'its' intelligentsia, offers a framework likely to solve the psychological tensions of these 'uprooted' individuals.

In fact, the approach developed by Gellner from the socio-economic perspective accompanies here the strategy of cultural reform evolved by A.D. Smith. The process of cultural reform therefore appears at the origin of the emergence of nationalism as an ideology, and the motivations in the field of interest underlie the involvement of the intelligentsia. Hence a sequential model, in which we find the main points of application of the theories examined till now, as it appears in the following table:

TABLE

Synthesis of Models of Nationalism Centred Around Ideological Construction

Authors concerned	*Phases of formation of nationalism*	*Supplementary factors*
Smith	Penetration of the modern state	Development of means of communication and of the educational system . and prey to socio-economic discrimination
Deutsch/Anderson		
Smith	Formation of an 'ambivalent' intelligentsia .	
Gellner		
Smith	Cultural reform (invention of a Golden Age) and emergence of a nationalist ethnic ideology	
Gellner	Rallying of the intelligentsia around this ideology	
Smith		

[1] In bold characters are the names of the authors whose work is directly relevant to one or another phase of the model, in normal letters those whose work describes secondary factors contributing to the realisation of one or another phase

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Beyond nationalism?

RAVI SUNDARAM

IN HIS classic article on nationalism, Tom Nairn captures much of the problem in understanding that phenomenon in a beautiful metaphor. Nationalism, says Nairn, is the modern version of the Roman God Janus, 'who stood above gateways with one face looking forward and the other backwards'. While one face of modern nationalism affirms its future-oriented vision in the halls of modernity, the other seeks contradictorily to affirm the 'ageless', primordial essence of the nation. One face affirms the historicity of the nation, the other the possibility of transcending that very boundedness through an eternal theory of origins.

This dual characteristic of modern nationalism has informed much, if not all, of the debate on the origins of nations and nationalism The questions of the 'inventedness' versus the 'primordial' character of nationalism, the debates between universalism and particularism, the nation as derivative of the Enlightenment versus the nation as civilisational resistance, all emerge from the duality of nationalist thought and practices. Nationalism has, in contrast to the hopes of liberals and Marxists alike, been the quintessential shape in which human identities have been formed in the 19th and 20th centuries. As such it has involved the energies of scores of writers in both traditions

In this essay we propose to address some of the questions raised above. However we believe the debates on nationalism have been inherently limited by the imaginative boundaries imposed by nationalism itself: the nation-state. A nation being the *object* of analysis does not make a nation or the nation-state the *unit* of analysis Most writers on nationalism have not been usually economical on such a count. With the coming of our *fin de siècle* we could like to pose the question – does it make any sense even debating about nationalism in the terms it has been done in the past few decades? To pose the issues, we look at the work of three important (Western)interventions in the debate on nationalism: Tom Nairn, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson.[1]

Writes Nairn in his book *The Break-Up of Britain,* 'The theory of nationalism represents Marxism's great historical failure.'(1977:329) Though Nairn does not go extensively into the causes for this failure, we can point to two crucial problem-areas that existed regarding the theorisation of nationalism in the Marxist tradition. The *first* was the optimistic choreography of the *Communist Manifesto*, where the expansion of capitalism on a world scale was posed almost in Smithian terms, assuming a free flow of capital and labour across national boundaries, without taking into account the existence of nation-states or the inter-state system. This classic formulation of Marx was to haunt his followers for generations to come. The solution was found in *assuming*, rather than explaining the emergence of nation-states and nationalism.

The *second* problem arose from the base-superstructure formulation which was mobilised to 'explain' nationalism. In this reading, nationalism was seen at best as the striving of the local bourgeoisies for control over the national market, or worse an irrational interruption in the otherwise cheerful march of history towards internationalism. Ernest Gellner calls Marxist approaches to nationalism the Wrong Address Theory: 'Just as extreme Shi'ite Muslims hold that Archangel Gabriel made a mistake, delivering the Message to Mohammed when it was intended for Ali, so Marxists basically like to think that the spirit of history or human consciousness made a terrible mistake. The awakening message was intended for *classes*, but by some terrible postal error

1 The choice of writers here is less to survey the literature on nationalism but to pose some of the issues in theorising nationalism Thus the important work of Hobsbawm is omitted. Likewise the very significant South Asian interventions (Chatterjee, Nandy) are omitted since they would require a larger and wide-ranging discussion

was delivered to *nations* '(cited in Giddens· 1987· 212)

Nairn's solution out of this quandary is many-fold. Firstly, Nairn calls for discarding traditional approaches to the study of nationalism *within* the framework of the nation-state This is a crucial part of Nairn's approach, since as we shall see he is among the very few writers on nationalism who is sensitive to the notion of historical capitalism as a global social system. Says Nairn

> My belief is that the only framework of reference which is of any real utility here *is that of world history as a whole*... Most approaches to the question are vitiated from the start by a country to country approach. Of course it is the ideology of world nationalism itself which induces us along this road, by suggesting that human society consists essentially of several hundred different and discrete 'nations', each of which has (or ought to have) its own postage stamps and national soul (1977·332, emphasis ours)

With this, the orthodox reading of nationalism being the expression of local bourgeois yearnings for a national market is rejected Nairn's world-historical analysis takes the frame of his theory of 'uneven development'. This is how Nairn's story goes. Before the conditions of (capitalist) uneven development there existed the 'historic' nation-states of Western Europe: England, France, Spain, Portugal and Holland. The expansion of capitalism on a world scale generated a global system defined by core-periphery relations. The very unevenness of capitalist development created conditions where the elites of peripheral societies yearned to join the 'cosmopolitan technocracy' of the core. This was done by appealing to the notion of locale, the pre-existing *ethnie*, forging a trans-class community 'The new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism.' says Nairn, 'had to invite the masses into history, and the invitation had to be written in a language they understood.' (Ibid· 340) In other words 'capitalism, even as it spread remorselessly over the world to unify human society into one more-or-less connected story for the first time, *also* engendered a perilous and convulsive new fragmentation of that society. The socio-historical cost of this rapid implantation of capitalism into world society was "nationalism". There was no other conceivable way in which the process could have occurred'(Ibid· p 341).

The more pressing problem in Nairn's framework is the question of *agency*: For all his stress on restoring the study of nationalism to a legitimate part of critical historical thought, nationalist mobilisations in Nairn's framework appear the product of elite manipulations (the intelligentsia) who 'invite' the masses into history.[2] This is a rather instrumental view, ignoring as it does a wealth of social history which has shown the contrary to be true The 'people' remain an abstraction, a silent other, the absence of which pervades Nairn's work.

Further, Nairn does tend to assume the formation of the historical 'nation' and nation-state as a *given*. Pre-19th century Europe, for Nairn, had historic nation-states which were, *then* followed by nationalism. 'Nationalism, *unlike* nationality or ethnic variety cannot be considered a 'natural' phenomenon' (p. 99) This raises a series of questions: if nationalism is an 'invented' category *following* nations, what is the relationship of the nationalist imaginary to the past? What prompts the particular choice of invention? Here Nairn is unable to capture the tension in the modern Janus, the combination of a simultaneous appeal to tradition and progress, why appeals to particular 'traditions' become crucial at different points in historical time.

Ernest Gellner's work on nationalism represents the most sophisticated version of still-extant modernisation perspectives on nationalism. Very simply, for Gellner, nationalism is a function of *industrialism*. The entire corpus of Gellner's work on nationalism is an expansion of that theme, as such Gellner's remains the most formidable attempt to confront the nationalist problematic from outside the Marxist tradition.

Gellner distinguishes between agrarian and industrial society, where the latter is by definition nationalist. Agrarian society is defined by an incongruence of state and culture, a ruling elite are informed by a high culture incomprehensible to the vast masses of the population who are sunk in particularistic 'low' or folk cultures. Both social mobility and the division of labor in agrarian society is very limited.[3]

Nationalism on the other hand is defined by the congruence of state and culture, which could only happen in an industrial society The nation is an abstract *rationalised* community presupposing a universal and standardised form of communication, which is functional to a complex division of labour. Industrial society therefore, requires a modern educational system with a single standardised language for the purpose of popular access and social mobility. This is done, says Gellner by destroying the cultural pluralism of the previous agrarian society, instead one of the high cultures of that society is taken and simply universalised in industrial society. Industrial society *needs* nationalism simply because it fits well with the goals of a complex division of labour.

In other words, Gellner takes Weber's thesis on rationalization and deploys it to explain the nationalist phenomenon. Weber had argued for the coming together of modernity and rationalisation where abstract rules would govern social life. This was the development of formal rationality; abstract forms of communication would increasingly govern social life. Gellner's interpretation of Weber's thesis maintains that the

2 Benedict Anderson criticises Nairn for claiming that nationalist activity always involves a mass struggle, pointing to the elite-based *creole* nationalisms of Latin America For Anderson, the concept of national imagining through print-inspired 'journeys' is a way to transcend the mass-elite dichotomy when looking at nationalism

3 The affinity to Durkheim here is obvious Durkheim's notion of mechanical and organic solidarity which is functional to a weak and strong division of labour respectively parallels Gellner's discussion of nationalism

typical expression of rationalisation is in and through the nation-state. There is, however, a crucial methodological change, Weber's Nietzsche-inspired decisionism has no place in Gellner's model. Gellner's approach is unashamedly *functionalist*, nationalism emerges because a rationalising/industrial society *needs* it. In other words, in common with other functionalist approaches, the ends determine the inquiry.

Gellner's conviction of the modernity (which here is isomorphic with industrialism) of nationalism leads him to question the Janus face of nationalism, the authenticity of nationalism's appeal to 'tradition'. 'Nationalism is not what it seems, above all it is not what it seems to itself. The cultures it claims to defend and revive are often its own inventions, or are modified out of all recognition' (1983:56). Gellner goes on:

> The basic deception and self-deception practiced by nationalism is this: nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society, where previous low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality of the population.... This is what *really* happens (Ibid: 57).

Here we have the essence of Gellner's formulation: that of nationalism as *fabrication* [4] The nationalist imagining of the past, the symbols and metaphors of nationalist mobilisation are, in the final analysis *instrumental* on behalf of the elites involved in the process. For the goal has been judged in advance, sooner or later the nationalist revival of folk cultures is abandoned in favor of the rationalised setting of state power.

Benedict Anderson's book on the rise of nationalism came at the same time as Gellner's—Anderson's work is, however, different in emphasis and approach. For one, Anderson's book does not have the more abstract Weberian narrative of Gellner's; the former has produced a historically embedded tract. Anderson's central innovations include a new emphasis on the *anthropological* basis of nationalist identity, and the importance of temporal perceptions in the making of the nation. Nationality and nationalism, says Anderson, are *cultural* artifacts of a particular kind, it is only through this framework that nationalism can be studied.

'Theorists of nationalism,' says Anderson, 'have often been perplexed, if not irritated by these three paradoxes: 1. The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of the nationalists. 2. The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept...vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations... 3. The 'political' power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence' (p. 14).

Anderson is quick to distinguish himself from the Gellnerian position that 'nationalism invents nations where they do not exist'. This, for Anderson equates nationalism with *fabrication*, doing considerable violence to the actual historical process of nation formation. Nations, says Anderson are not to be distinguished by their falsity/genuineness, but by the *form* in which they are imagined.[5] A nation says Anderson is 'an imagined political community', and this imagining is both limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because 'members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members...yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (p 15). This imagining is *limited* because the process is spatially limited to the boundaries of the nation, rather than being co-terminus with humankind. It is sovereign because its telos is the nation-state. Finally, says Anderson, 'it is imagined as a *community*, because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep horizontal relationship' (p.16).

Anderson locates the rise of nationalism at the matrix of the rise of what he calls 'print-capitalism' which fundamentally transformed ways of imagining the nation, the disintegration of earlier religious communities, and the emergence of a new conception of time. It is the temporal consequences of modernity that Anderson places at the centre of his discussion on nationalism, as such it is these that we shall first take up in our discussion.

Pre-modern communities, based on world religions (Christianity, Islam, Confucianism) were marked by a vertical notion of time, these were huge communities of *signs* bound by sacral languages (Arabic, Latin). The predominant notion of time is *simultaneous* with no notion of progression on a historical calendar. It is at the crisis of this mode of experience that nationalism appears:

> The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. Disintegration of paradise: nothing makes fatality more arbitrary. Absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity more necessary. What was then required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning....Few things were more suited to this end than the idea of a nation. If nation-states are widely conceded to be 'new' and 'historical', the nations to which they give expression always loom out of an immemorial past, and more important, glide into a limitless future. *It is the magic of nationalism to turn chance into destiny* (Ibid· 19, emphasis ours).

4 As early as 1964, in his *Thought and Change*, Gellner noted an amusing fact – the inverse relationship between the ideology and the reality of nationalism 'The self-image of nationalism involves a stress on folk, folklore, popular culture etc In fact, nationalism becomes important precisely when these things become artificial Genuine peasants or tribesmen, however proficient at folk dancing, generally do not make good nationalists (p 162)

5 This point has made Anderson's work particularly attractive to post-structuralist cultural theory The latter has welcomed the fact that Anderson seeks to remove nationalist imagining from an originary point of departure, further in Anderson, the focus seems to be less the 'real' history of nationalism, than the focus on nationalist *representation*. Whether Anderson himself would commit himself to a full-blooded post-realist history is entirely another matter

What was the crucial temporal shift to modernity? The notion of temporal simultaneity through the religious community was replaced by a concept of 'empty homogenous time', now simultaneity was marked not by pre-figuring and fulfilment but by temporal coincidence measured by clock and calendar The emerging communities were not based on *signs* but on language The crucial factor in the constitution of these new communities was the emergence of print-capitalism

Here Anderson closely follows Walter Benjamin's argument in the latter's essay 'Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' Benjamin had argued that rapid innovations in the technology of printing had destroyed the aura of the traditional artwork, making it available (through reproduction) to a large audience Mechanical reproduction had opened up a whole new space in modernity, by expanding the horizon and space of aesthetic perception Anderson deploys Benjamin's formulations on the artwork to generate a theory of print-capitalism Print creates a new way of imagining identity, blending well with the new temporality of modernity

Print led to the decline of the older sacral languages, thereby institutionalising vernaculars. This transition created new reading publics (first middle classes, and later with increasing literacy, an increasing section of the population) joined in an anonymous fraternity. Further, print-capitalism gave a greater fixity to language, by the 17th century languages in Europe assume their modern form The combination of print, capitalism and a new fatality generated the possibility of imagining the nation, print-inspired 'journeys' of the middle and later the popular classes defined the contours of the imagined community The newspaper was crucial, not only did it create a reading public, it provided a sense of a community moving forward in empty homogenous time

Once emergent, nationalism assumed a 'modal' form, from where it was available for future mobilisations Historically, *three* 'models' emerged which were then available for future emulation. The first was the creole nationalisms of the Americas, where imagined communities were created by 'pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial creole printmen', whose economic interests were pitted against the metropole. For various historical reasons (most crucial being the retrograde post-colonial order in the Americas) creole nationalism was not the most attractive model available for emulation.

The second model emerged from the linguistic nationalisms of Europe, with a strong populist bent, and based on a national-state. This, says Anderson, made linguistic nationalism available 'for pirating'. The *third* model was 'Russifying' nationalism, the imposition of cultural homogeneity from the top. Russification was the model favored in the colonial period, as such it defined the emergence of anti-colonial nationalisms. The broader point in Anderson's schema is this, the three 'modular' forms were readily available to the colonial intelligentsia to emulate Pre-existing forms (print-languages, the idea of the nation) help shape and define shape anti-colonial consciousness. The bilingual intelligentsia produced by colonial education was well-suited to interpret the modular experiences for the masses. Says Anderson: 'Print-literacy already made possible the imagined community floating in empty homogenous time...Bilingualism meant access, through the European language of state, to modern Western culture in the broadest sense, and, in particular, to the models of nationalism, nation-ness and nation-state elsewhere in the nineteenth century' (p. 107).

At the first glance, Anderson's theory seems to break away from the more restricted framework of Gellner's in posing the issue of the ideological constitution of nation formation Further, Anderson poses the cultural construction of identity, uncumbered by orthodox Enlightenment notions of truth/falsity. Having said this, Anderson's narrative remains fundamentally limited by his elite framework of nationalist mobilisation 'What,' asks Partha Chatterjee, 'are the substantive differences between Anderson and Gellner on 20th century nationalism? None.' (1986: 21)

The problem is broader. Anderson's exclusive focus on print capitalism (like Habermas' focus on the reading publics in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*) privileges an elite reading of nationalism led by a westernised intelligentsia, excluding the complex constitution of identities in the nationalist movement. The focus on print tends to exclude oral traditions which were crucial in the periphery. Further, the very concept of a 'modular' nationalism erases significant differences in the trajectories of nationalist mobilisation in the core and the periphery.[6]

To be sure, Anderson's notion of 'print-capitalism' is a necessary, but by no means a sufficient condition in the analysis of nationalisms in the world-system. Print contributed (but did not create) to the formation of nationalist elites, shaped the formation of reading publics and inspired the 'journeys' of the metropolitan and colonial intelligentsia in imagining the nation However the notion of print-capitalism *restricts* the formation of national identity to local elite initiatives, and in the case of the periphery, between the local intelligentsia and the colonising power. In fact the construction of national identity drew from sources beyond print,[7] for that very reason nationalism remained ambiguous and contested. It is this *contradictoriness* of the national project which is missing from *Imagined Communities*.

6 Anderson's use of Bejnamin is also problematic Anderson's opposition between vertical temporal communities in the pre-modern period versus the 'empty homogenous time' of modernity misses the dialectic In fact *both* experiences are typical of modernity and nationalism It is ironical that Anderson uses Benjamin for this rather orthodox juxtaposition of temporal categories given the German writer's sympathy for messianic thought

7 In his caustic review of *Imagined Communities*, Ranajit Guha claims that Anderson, 'by conceptualizing nationalism exclusively in terms of interaction between the indigenous elite and colonisers, fails to acknowledge the sturdy nationalism of the mass of the people, especially the Indian

With Anderson the 'theory of nationalism' among western writers has reached an impasse. The great canonical discourses obtaining from Kohn's classic work were informed by a certain obsessiveness about the national – today that obsessiveness, that search for a Archimedean point of definition, has lost its bearings

In his conclusion of *Nations and Nationalism since 1788* (1990) Eric Hobsbawm suggested that we may in fact be witnessing the denouement of the nationalist period It seems to us that Hobsbawm's assertion, unlike earlier liberal and Marxist predictions are based on a more substantial historical understanding of today's global situation Current 'nationalist' assertions have to be viewed as an entirely new historical phenomenon rather than recurrence of past national forms.

Twentieth century nationalism was in many ways the third world elite's passport to Western modernity In this was implicated a notion of temporalised history and crucially, the ideology of development. National state-building was central to the project along with the ideology of national development. At the helm of the process was the secular/nationalist intelligentsia committed to what Bauman(1987) calls 'legislative reason' The notion of the intelligentsia as the legislators of modernity was an innovation of the Jacobin period of the French revolution. The project of 'legislative reason' saw society as a *tabula rasa,* to be molded in accordance with the ideals of a 'higher' order. What emerged was a 'gardening' state committed to weeding out contingency and ambi-valence, Augustine's *City of God* secularised in its 19th century version

Nowhere did this imaginary find more committed, more enthusiastic followers than third world nationalists. Here legislative reason was harmonised with the ideology of development The results were disastrous. Not only did 'development' have the effect of continuing the destruction of the indigenous social order begun by colonialism, at the end of the process the very basis of nationhood stood threatened.

In their brilliant polemic *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* (1944) Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer pointed out that by the 20th century 'myth becomes enlightenment and enlightenment becomes increasingly mythical.' Having vanquished nature (the home of mythical threats to modernity) the enlightenment was faced with nature's revenge in the return of the repressed: in the shape of fascism. In the periphery, the return of the repressed took a different shape – the crisis of nationalism.

In the current situation state-sponsored development – crucial to the ideology of old-style nationalism has been replaced by the retreat of the state from many areas of the economy Semi-autarchic development (import-substitution, national economic independence) is nowhere on the agenda of the elites All the new movements/states in Europe clamor for affiliation to regional blocs like the EEC; in the East Asian case nationalist economic development has been transcended by regionalist solutions.

The dominant alternative to old style nationalism in the periphery is that of civilisational movements – the most important being that of Islam. The crisis of developmentalist/nationalist states (Algeria/Turkey/Egypt/Iran) has led to the emergence of a new civilisational movement whose relationship to old-style nationalism is ambivalent. In the diverse Islamic imaginaire a *vertical* notion of time (where all believers are joined by solidarity against injustice and 'westernism') co-exists with the language of development, but the movement is clearly away from the old period based on the development of the nation-state. Even in the Indian case where the BJP/VHP mobilisation seeks to establish an authoritarian Hindu nationalist state, the civilisational issues are clearly an object of address.

The crisis of old style nationalism is paralleled by the new utopia of globalisation.[8] The rhetoric of an emergent multicultural globe in fact hides the reality of deep instability in the international system – the crisis of old-style sovereignty , the secular loss of Western economic power with centres of accumulation shifting to East Asia, and wide-spread disillusionment with the deep structures of western modernity – manifested in the crisis of *all* existing ideologies. The rise of generalised disenchantment – Weber's great prediction about the culture of modernity, is the basis of the post-modern sensibility In this sense we can safely do away with the modern Janus. The great millennial, binary vision of old-style nationalism is behind us – the future exists – if anything without certainties.

peasantry' (Guha, unpublished manuscript) This position seems to repeat Anderson's error, if only from the opposite point of view It is one thing to point out the limitations of Anderson's print-capitalism formulation, but it is yet another to valorise the inherent nationalism of a peasantry in isolation from local elite/bourgeois initiatives Somehow the dialectic of national mobilisation is missed

8 It may be important to recall Adorno and Horkheimer's warning in the *Dialectic*, 'the fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant '

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Hindu/Muslim/Indian

FAISAL FATEHALI DEVJI

So long as the hostility to one central government for India, which is the ideology underlying Pakistan persists, the ghost of Pakistan will be there, casting its ominous shadow upon the political future of India.
Dr Ambedkar
(Pakistan or Partition of India, vii)

If the Muslims in India are a separate nation, then, of course, India is not a nation
(Ibid., 12)

HAPPY nations are all alike; every unhappy nation is unhappy in its own way. So it is that the unhappiness represented by the Indian Muslim is peculiar in that it constitutes a historical burden which is as heavy as the nation itself. The ghost of Pakistan is not simply the spirit of Muslim guilt; it is also a spectre which, by transforming all subsequent struggles into the struggle for 'another Pakistan', ends up making Indian history into a series of variations upon the theme of partition as original sin. It is not mere coincidence, then, that Sikh Khalistan should be a synonym for Muslim Pakistan (they both mean 'Land of the Pure'), because in the history that the Indian state obsessively re-enacts, the Muslim separatist is nothing more than the original sign of its failure. The Muslim, in other words, represents a fundamental anxiety of nationalism itself: of the nation as something unachieved. And as such, every Muslim becomes, at a certain level, the symbol of national frustration and insecurity. This is how he or she enters into the history of independent India.

My use here of terms such as guilt, obsession, anxiety, frustration, and insecurity does not imply the actual existence of 'neuroses' within Indian politics. Nor do I conceive of groups as individuals to be psychoanalyzed. Rather, I use these terms referring to rhetorical states or tropes created in and imputed by political discourse. In other words, I am employing psychoanalytic language to *represent* a situation (the 'communal' or 'Muslim' problem) which is *experienced* medically or neurotically in a way that naturalizes (or un-naturalizes) political problems as illness which have to be excised: difficulties which are not amenable to discussion because they are not rational in the first place. And this language of disease underscores the derivative discourse of 'secular' Indian nationalism in that its (communal) difficulties are viewed as unnatural departures from a universal/European ideal. Therefore the Muslim problem is created as the Asiatic *failure* of nationalism's enlightenment project – a failure which entails the very possibility of nationalist coercion. It is this sense of (potential) failure, which I think results from what Partha Chatterjee calls an unresolved contradiction between the (post) colonial nation's enlightenment project and its nativist consciousness of difference, that struc-

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tures Indian nationalism's narrative around the problem of communalism.[1]

Now if it is the case that (post) colonial Indian nationalism is invented as a problematic around the figure of the Muslim/communal as problem – the Muslim as original sin – then this nationalism cannot be analyzed ontologically, according to its positive or substantive being, but only in terms of the excluded difference (communalism) upon which such a positivity is predicated. Indeed, ontological studies of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson's result in positivities which have meaning only by eliding difference altogether.[2] Anderson's idea of 'modular nationalism,' for example, is itself nationalist in its concern with the nation's 'origin' in an enlightenment project which renders difference unnatural and so merely a sign of failure. This kind of ontological analysis participates in nationalist discourse because it refuses to see difference as constitutive of the nation.

If an ontological reading of the nation cannot take difference into account, deconstructive readings which do so face other problems Homi Bhabha's essays, for instance, are valuable for their attention to the margins – the silences and contradictions – of national narratives, as is his concentration on the 'performative' construction of the nation over a historicism that shuts out slippage, play, and ambivalence by its totalizing narrative of a necessity that is in fact allied to the 'pedagogic' narrative of nationalism.[3] But Bhabha's emphasis on the social (as) text, whether or not it accounts for the 'perplexity' of lived experience, ends up aestheticizing this narrative and its discontents precisely by refusing to go beyond its 'performance' The possibilities opened up by a deconstruction of the performative narrative of nationalism remain the sites of aesthetic valorization unless they are 'historicized' by being tied to a continuist narrative of violence and victimization that links the victims of nationalism, located on the terrain of difference, to a collective identity with historical depth: a history that has meaning, of course, only in terms of the nation, but that is able to stand up to its continuist narrative, and in doing so, also to justify the suffering of its other/earlier victims both by holding the nation *historically* accountable for it, and by giving it meaning in a teleology of struggle. Indeed the violence that the nation directs against difference can only be comprehended historically – anything else would itself be an act of violence and forgetting. But the history of suffering has to be liberated from nationalist narrative in a way which does not simply replace one history by another, which does not 'nationalize' the history of difference by totalizing it. Instead this narrative must fracture the totality or economy of history itself by interrupting it as a *record* of difference.

And so I am attempting in this essay not to write a history of Indian nationalism, nor even a history of its 'other', but to interrupt its narrative with a history of difference: the difference which nationalism simultaneously creates and excludes, the difference which makes nationalism possible in the first place. By taking apart the category 'communal', then, we might arrive at a nation, interrupted in its ontological narrative, as the other face of difference.

What is communalism? The term is a colonial one, both historically and ideologically, because it presumes the existence of primordial and irrational hatreds which call for government by a modern, rational, third party. Communalism, in other words, translates into limitations to political representation and denies 'secular' nationalism altogether. This was the way in which it was employed as a concept both by the colonial state and, later, by the Muslim League's rejection first of a single Indian electorate, and then of a single Indian state. While the Indian National Congress strenuously denied this view, independent India inherited the concept of communalism and continued to use it, but in a marginalized form – which is to say that although communalism could no longer constitute a denial of nationalism, it did remain an 'extremist' threat to the nation, one which became, in fact, an important excuse for the state's suspension of civil liberties (curfew, censorship, martial law, etc.).

Now dividing the ideally unitary nation (as opposed to the disparate colonial empire) into a dominant secularism and a marginal communalism allows for a different kind of politics by those who are placed in the latter category While no one admits to being communal, then, groups such as the Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party), the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (National Volunteer Society), and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Congress) all deny the dominance of secularism, which they accuse of being Westernized, divisive, elitist, and a failure. Instead they claim to represent the *true nation*, and any proof of the validity of this argument (primarily in the form of the increasingly common 'communal riot') forces the state into an increasingly unrealistic denunciation of unscrupulous agitators and foreign hands – for the 'people' cannot be wrong in a representative system. The colonial state too, of course, refused to consider its population seditious, but this was obviously not so much for reasons of democratic legitimacy as because such a notion posed a threat to the very idea of (moral) governance.

Hindu nationalism presents in the most stark fashion the classic social-contract opposition of democracy and ethics, or representation and justice. That is to say, does a democratic government simply represent the demands of its populace – no matter how unpleasant in theory and orchestrated in practice? Or does it lay itself open to charges of elitism and illegitimacy in doing otherwise? Whereas the 'secular' state, however, cannot answer this question and simply obfuscates it, the Hindu nationalists opt

1 Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World A Derivative Discourse* Delhi Oxford University Press, 1986

2 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* London Verso, 1983

3 Homi K Bhabha, (ed) *Nation and Narration* London and New York Routledge, 1990

for the former choice, which they justify by an equally classic form of fascism. the morally overriding claim of nativism or national authenticity There is nothing primordial or traditional, therefore, about this politics; neither is it colonial, but born of democracy and independence.

Why Hindu nationalism, then? I do not think the usual explanations of simple political opportunism or the search for authenticity in an alienating modernity are convincing enough, given the great diversity of its support And yet the argument which claims that Hindu nationalism variously empowers different segments of society (the most popular being 'disenchanted youth') is incapable of dealing with it as a relatively cohesive ideology. No doubt Hindu nationalist organizations do provide means of political empowerment, but the loyalty this kind of nativism commands, whether it be aggressive or passive, constant or sporadic, exceeds explanations of a purely material nature. In fact such explanations fall back into what one may call a colonial mode of reasoning by denying (moral) thought to other people and so condemning them to an irrationality which can only be ruled

Ideologically, I think, Hindu nationalism has emerged as the only mode of resistance to the 'secular' state – indeed as the only credible, organized form of alternative politics in a country where the ruling elite has appropriated secular nationalism so completely as to allow no room for dispute in its terms Even the Left collapses into secular-nationalist attitudes when faced with a 'communalism' it is incapable of understanding or dealing with apart from a largely irrelevant rhetoric of class conflict. Secular nationalism itself, in other words, has become a kind of state 'fundamentalism', a sort of self-legitimizing mode of coercion that ends up generating its own nemesis in the 'communalism' it demonizes

It is interesting to note that this is not true of Pakistan's Islamic nationalism. Whereas the Pakistani state has never been able to control its own ideology and has regularly to face challenges put in the mouths of its own founding father (God, His Prophet, Iqbal, and Jinnah), then, the Indian or Congress state has permitted no serious opposition in the name of Gandhi or Nehru – to the extent that the only choice left for resistance is iconoclasm the increasingly frequent sacrilege of secular-nationalist icons Last spring, for instance, the 'volk' who had been bussed in to New Delhi to demonstrate for the 'secular' Bahujan Samaj (Popular Society) Party got tired of their minders and vandalized Gandhi's cremation site, extinguishing its eternal flame. Then in the summer, Bal Thackeray, leader of the Maharashtra-Hindu Shiv Sena (Shivaji's Army) Party, praised the Mahatma's assassin to no public outcry Eminent secular-nationalists such as the industrialist J. R D. Tata had then to scramble to invent this missing outcry by calling together a well-publicized meeting of equally eminent and like-minded personages to exorcise the 'communalists'. Praising Gandhi's killer, after all, threatens Indian nationalism in a way that police actions, military atrocities, caste wars, and minority bashing do not; certainly these latter never call forth such assembled denunciation.

We might say, then, that the popularity of Hindu nationalism today marks the fragmentation of secular-nationalist hegemony. Confessional nationalism, after all, which historically has been the great 'other' of Indian nationalism, provides the logical challenge to a hegemony that had staked its claim to legitimacy on a populist secularism In this sense Hindu nationalism today is merely another avatar of the Muslim nationalism that founded Pakistan: the ghost of Pakistan haunts the Indian state not only in the threat of other partitions (Punjab, Kashmir, Assam), but also in the threat to a coercively homogeneous *Indian* nationalism itself. There is nothing ironic or paradoxical, therefore, in the Hindu nationalists' regular choice of Pakistan as an illustration of and justification for Hindutva – the Hindu nation. And this signals a fundamental shift in political discourse· for if the history invoked by the first national movement as a justification for its existence was pre-British and colonial, that invoked by the Hindu parties has to do with the postcolonial failure of the old nationalism with partition and its results, a failure which has become the great new referent of modern Indian politics. But even when the Hindu nationalists do refer to the 'glorious past' so beloved of the secular, their use of history is far more sophisticated than that sponsored by the state.

A case in point is provided by the controversy over the status of a mosque in Ayodhya which the Hindu parties claim was built over a temple marking the birthplace of Rama. While the secularists were painstakingly attempting to prove historically the falseness of this 'communal' allegation, L. K. Advani, a leader of the BJP, issued a statement asserting that historical truth was not the issue here, not only because Hinduism was unconcerned with such vulgar certainties, but also because the real issue was simply the will of the Hindu nation to (re)construct a temple. History, in other words, only provided symbols for the expression of national will. Can the truth-history of the old nationalism stand up to this cynical history of the new?

If Hindu nationalism presents today the only viable alternative politics in India, a politics which is still fluid enough to allow for a certain freedom of expression, violence provides perhaps the greatest mode of this expression. Violence in this sense is the only form of political action which is theoretically free of the state or possessed completely by its agents. It is the only form of politics which confronts the state with an independent identity through an independent *fait accompli* that historically has carried the resonance of populism and primordiality. In this way we may call it *terrorist*. But we must be careful here, because the rapid parliamentarization and so legitimization of Hindu nationalism has broken down, to some extent, the radical character of this terrorism. Indeed Hindu nationalist violence, while it was probably never spontaneous, single-minded, or unorches-

trated, seems to be mutating increasingly and obviously into the kind of planned act with which certain elements of the state are complicitous. Its acceptability marks, as it were, the state's hesitant transition from a discredited 'secularist' ideology to a new nationalism with a new scapegoat: no longer the communalist but the minority.

And it is this new legitimacy of the Hindu nationalist, I think, that has made possible the BJP's recent 'secularization' or mainstreaming – for this indicates not so much a lowering of anti-Muslim feeling or violence as a rapprochement with the governing establishment that correlates Hinduism and secularism, leaving Muslims to bear the burden of the communal. Indeed the Muslim would exist as a sign of national failure and remain a focus of attack even were there no Hindu nationalist parties, because the real problem is not religiosity but the politics of nationalism itself. An ominous sign of this appeared a few years ago during the Shah Bano case – when a Muslim divorcee's suit against her husband, who refused to pay alimony by invoking Muslim personal law, became a *cause celebre* in which secular and Hindu nationalists banded together to attack the principle of communal personal law itself, calling instead for a uniform civil code. A case which could have been resolved within the bounds of personal law, then, was made into the rallying point for a coercive nationalism directed explicitly against minority groups. Given this, the Muslim community came together in a united front against a national civil code, and Shah Bano dropped her suit, all of which did nothing more than confirm the Muslim's status as saboteur of the nation.

If, however, the 'free' expression of Hindu nationalism is directed at the secular state, why is it Muslims who are attacked? According to the Hindu nationalists, because they allow themselves to be used as vote-banks by the established parties, who evade the imperative of Hindu populism by playing up the issue of minority rights. In other words, Muslims constitute only the site of struggle between two forms of nationalism. Of course from the 'colonialist' viewpoint of the Indian state, communalism is simply an irrational conflict which it has no part in and has only to arbitrate. And this rejection of responsibility in a way simply confirms the Hindu nationalist charge, for the state does exploit Muslims in refusing to see communalism as a conflict in which it is a participant. For both kinds of nationalism, therefore, anti-Muslim politics merely constitute the stereotyped media of a different battle altogether – a battle which can be controlled and legitimized only by being displaced onto Muslim bodies.

While Islam, then, does represent the nation's failure, Muslims as such are not the objects of Hindu nationalism because they are not *addressed* by it. In the colonial period there was at least a kind of dialogue between Hindu and Muslim groups: Islam was addressed intellectually as an opponent by organizations such as the Arya Samaj (Aryan Society). Today, on the other hand, Islam is not worth thinking about – it no longer signifies a 'virile' moment in the history of (Indian) civilization, as much of colonial scholarship had it.

This lack of dialogue, which is indicated by a deep and practically universal ignorance of what Muslims believe and do, does not mean, however, that Muslims are ignored as thinking beings. Indeed their supposed subversion of the nationalist project is a source of deep anxiety, to the extent that they are urgently required to validate this project by their assent. Ironically, therefore, the very Muslim autonomy that the nation constructs in order to legitimate its coercion becomes a point of insecurity that puts its own hegemony in doubt. It is primarily in this sense that alleged Muslim sympathies toward Pakistan are spoken of: not so much political treachery as a *resistance* to nationalism. In other words, Muslim 'support' for Pakistan during India-Pakistan wars, or, more importantly, during India-Pakistan cricket matches, cannot be seen as a rational political choice, for this would give rise to the issue of self-determination and so the Indian nation's total failure; instead it has to be conceived of as a kind of recalcitrant irrationalism. The Muslim problem is an internal problem of the nation's hegemony – or rather it signifies the deep anxiety of this nationalist hegemony.

Apart from the desire for Muslim assent and acknowledgment, it no longer matters what a Muslim does or thinks: an essentialized identity is simply imposed on her or him. And this essentialized identity has to be affirmed again and again in order to void the Muslim of all personality apart from Muslimness. So at a film in Delhi last February, the appearance of the hero's name, Salman Khan, on the screen, provoked shouts of 'Musalman (that is, Muslim) Khan' from the audience and general merriment. The frightening thing about such a display, of course, is that it came from an ostensibly sympathetic, well-disposed group of people. Similarly, government television advertisement promoting secularism tend to represent 'good' Muslims who are as essentialized and voided of personality as the 'bad' Muslims of the Hindu nationalist. In one particular commercial, for example, a Westernized, secular, Hindu father and son exploring some ruins encounter a gentle old Muslim man who, in sharp contrast to them, is stigmatized by the symbols of his faith: cap, beard, rosary, the mark of prostration on his forehead. This 'typically' archaic, idealized 'good' Muslim *does not exist*, which is to say he transforms all real Muslims, all Muslims who are not part of historical romance, into 'bad' Muslims.

But it is women who provide perhaps the most complex images of the Muslim. The Muslim woman appears in film and literature as a figure of romance (usually) in the role of either courtesan or veiled innocence – an archaic-exotic representative of the *seductiveness* of Muslim culture. Indeed she is the primary medium through which the generally *historical* romance of the Muslim is made manifest. This attraction, however, is by no means benign; indeed it frequently elicits pleasure in the shape of a rape fan-

tasy. So in the May 1992 issue of *Stardust*, a popular Bombay film magazine, an incident in which the (Muslim) starlet Farah was terrorized by Hindu nationalists is reported as a fantasy of violation. The actress, apparently, was performing in Kolhapur when she was threatened in her dressing room by gunmen who accused her of mouthing 'anti-national' sentiments in Dubai and forced her to 'confess' this crime before her audience. The event *Stardust* constructs as a narrative in which the seductive *power* of the Muslim (woman) is broken in a pleasurable act of compulsion where Muslimhood is forced to speak its name as treason:

> She was trembling with fear Her hands were shivering uncontrollably and her brow was knitted with beads of sweat. Her palms were moist and her mouth suddenly gone dry. Even the words she had to utter to save her life lost their way, coming out in a barely audible mumble. . It was the normally fearless Farah – fiery Farah herself – whose iron will had been bent, her courageous front shattered to smithereens – at gunpoint.. "Okay, Okay! I said It!" she cried. . The "threatener" had become the "threatened" for once.

In this and other passages on 'Farah's frazzled, almost hysterical frame of mind,' rape is plotted like a film sequence and consumed as a commodity of popular culture Farah literally 'acts out' a role possible only for Muslim (or Sikh/Dalit/tribal) women, a scene which aestheticizes violence as the surmounting or exorcising of a dangerous Muslim 'attraction'. Violence here has its own erotic – whose climax arrives at Farah's confession to 'all Indians' In the rush of this pleasure, however, the actress' pathetic defense is ignored: 'Even I'm an Indian after all.'

It is important to note that caricatures of the Muslim are connected to nationalism in such a way that the non-Indian Muslim generally enjoys a different image. In the surge of anti-American feeling produced in India by Operation Desert Storm, for instance, the Urdu press stressed the war's Islamic aspects and implications, while the rest of the media sympathized with the Iraqi people without letting their Muslim identity get in the way. And during the last election campaign, L K. Advani, leader of the BJP and former refugee from Karachi, informed emigrant Sindhi Hindus in the Bombay suburb of Ulhasnagar that he had met Benazir Bhutto, whom he called a daughter of the Sindhi people.

This statement regarding a Pakistani leader was received with cheers. What all of this means, in effect, is that the Muslim is problematic only as Indian – because she or he has become nothing more than a symbol of the nation's failure. Thus Bal Thackeray, head of the Shiv Sena, pronounced some months ago that he was not against the Muslims *of* India but only the Muslims *in* India. And so it was that at a seminar on gender and communalism at Delhi University last winter, a 'politically correct' speaker, in a 'slip of the tongue', drew a distinction between Indian and Muslim. Muslims have become problematic precisely as a minority ('one of our minorities', as it was usually put to me) whose status within the Indian or Hindu nation is unclear.

Muslim images of the Hindu, while similarly stereotyped, are not so much flat essences as icons invested with such a power that they have to be handled ritually. Many Muslims, for example, even in private conversation, refer to Hindus only indirectly, using terms like 'them' or the initial 'H'. This taboo on naming, I think, is due not only to fear, but also to the fact that for the Muslim, knowledge of the Hindu is something vitally important, as important as life itself, and not some throw-away cliché. As such it possesses a certain occult value which has to be hedged by ritual and taboo. There are, of course, other kinds of Hindu caricatures as well, one of the most popular being the old image of the Hindu as effeminate vegetarian. I have heard this stereotype invoked by Muslims who lived every day with the fear that their lives might be taken by a Hindu; but I stopped seeing this as a paradox once I realized the image's fundamentally *pathetic* character.

Given present conditions, Muslims are forced to retain the sheds of pride and dignity in exactly such an unrealistic manner. They are reduced to a process of trying to convince themselves that they retain the colonial epithet of 'martial race', an identity which has now been appropriated by Hindus, who had suffered the humiliation of effeminacy during the Raj. So when a young Muslim professional in Ahmedabad told me that Muslims invited retaliation by their aggressiveness and intransigence, I did not think that he had naively accepted the views of the majority, I realized, rather, that he could maintain a positive Muslim identity only by empowering his community with such 'bad' agency – for if there was no 'bad' agency there was no 'good' solution. But when this young man went on to recommend that the call to prayer be eliminated because it constituted a statement of Muslim aggression, I came to see, in addition, that this claim of agency could lead to a situation where victims blame themselves for their own victimization.

It is precisely the 'feminization' of the Muslim as victim that results in such reaction – reactions which are, in fact, deliberately encouraged. So there exists a large sign in the courtyard of Delhi's Jama Masjid in which the mosque *as woman* recounts her harassment by Indian troops during Mrs. Gandhi's period of emergency rule (when the mosque's bazaar was destroyed), and her molestation by the state ever since. Muslim men are then urged to assert their masculinity and protect the mosque. As woman, of course, the mosque (and by extension the whole Muslim community) retains an identity only as victim and sign: a sign which prevents Muslim speech by 'speaking for' her. There is no doubt in my mind that this sign indicates, in certain quarters, a growing cult of Muslim manhood that is prompted by the threat of Hindu nationalist 'virility' but exercised, probably, mostly on Muslim women.

Muslim attempts to claim agency, 'neurotic' though they may be, necessarily arise from the essentialized identity imposed on them by nationalists of all

stripes. Now an identity over which the group itself has no control is not 'communal' but 'racial' The Muslim community is increasingly a *racial* community – one which exists in spite of Muslims rather than because of them. It is the rigid shell within which alone can Muslims construct any kind of self-image. Muslims, of course, might also feel racially about Hindus, but I would not call this *racism*, because such a feeling generally cannot translate into wide-ranging discrimination, which is what I take 'racism' (as opposed to 'prejudice', for example) to imply.

The term 'communalism', then, because it denies its relationship to nationalism, and suggests a false equivalence of conflictual power, should be abandoned in favour, perhaps, of 'racism' and 'prejudice' – terms which tie Indians to an international language of oppression, pairing them with supporters of apartheid in South Africa or the Ku Klux Klan in America. Of course this form of 'racism' has little in common with genetic theory (although this is not completely absent), but it certainly does privilege the body, exclusive of alienable beliefs or practices, as the mark of difference.

So not only does Muslimhood inhere in people, it also *must* be inscribed on their bodies as physical features and apart from the idea of a moral or *national* community, in the form of veils, caps, beards, marks of prostration, etc in order to be instantly identifiable. I was often told that I did not 'look' Muslim, and realized that this made certain people nervous – because they weren't able to place me 'racially'. Unlike the deracialized 'good' Muslim who was welcomed into the ranks of secular nationalism, therefore, the Muslim today, whether bad or good, is increasingly as stigma alone rather than by any difference which could become the basis of a moral community and so of self-determination And this anxiety to fix Muslimhood on the body takes on a somewhat Nazi tone when, during pogroms, the identity of men who deny their Muslimhood is determined by checking if they have been circumcised Racism is when life hangs upon a foreskin [4]

A Muslim might be as bigoted and violent as a Hindu, but as a member of an impoverished and demoralized *race*, we have to consider him or her a victim in the larger sense This victimhood may be elaborated as follows: first, there has been no autonomous Muslim leadership or organized politics since the colonial period. The reason for this is simple: the state has systematically crushed every attempt at organization and infiltrated Muslim institutions with informers Indeed, I didn't know whether to feel flattered or frightened when I found *myself* being followed by two detectives after conducting some research at a Muslim library in Bombay last year. Now since one can be a Muslim leader only within an established party, it is not surprising that none of these powerless, token Muslims have obtained any kind of popular Muslim support. Faced with this, the government and the press regularly lament the absence of true Muslim leadership – by which they mean 'representative Muslims' in the colonial sense, obsequious men of influence – and scramble to find 'leaders' whom they can deal with. Muslims, in the meantime, flock to anyone who seems to possess power, without necessarily agreeing with her or his politics.

One such leader, for example, is Imam Bukhari, the head of Delhi's Jama Masjid (not traditionally a very important position politically), who has been designated a 'representative Muslim' by the state and so enjoys a certain degree of support, even though the Urdu press is very critical of him and 'Muslim leaders' in general (such as Syed Shahabuddin of the Janata Dal or Arif Mohammad Khan of the Congress). Insofar as it exists, therefore, organized Muslim politics in India is fragmented and *ad hoc*. There has been talk lately of a grand coalition of India's oppressed minorities, but given the fact that very few of them have any kind of political organization or leadership, it is difficult to imagine how such a coalition could do anything more constructive than calling for demonstrations of protest. Given this lack of organized politics, Muslims are pressed into a vague romanticization of their 'glorious' past, into a cult of masculinity, and into a kind of pan-Islamism that is really a rather pathetic attempt to retain their dignity. Thus their attitude towards Pakistan: which is not normally viewed as a place of refuge, which is not normally spoken of in treasonous terms, but which constitutes, by its very existence, a special focus of pride for many Indian Muslims. So during the Gulf war, when pro-Saddam feeling was high, a Delhi Urdu newspaper, *Nai Duniya* (New World), carried on its front page a portrait of the Iraqi president at prayer surrounded by daggers representing the allied forces – including other Muslim countries but excluding Pakistan.

The lack of an autonomous Muslim politics leads to the second aspect of their victimhood: widespread paranoia – or a 'siege mentality', as the Indian press would have it. This paranoia, let us be clear, is not simply fear of something *to come*, it is a form of violence in itself, whose most frightening aspect is that it has become normalized and is not treated as the persecution it is. One of the more common expression of Muslim paranoia is a dissimulation of identity. Affluent Muslim housewives in Bombay conceal their religious identity when out shopping or promenading; their husbands use Hindu names to obtain business licences or in their general dealings with the bureaucracy. In Delhi I knew a Muslim cook from Bijnore who had changed his name to Ashok to avoid trouble, and who would surreptitiously send me signals of a secret complicity. And while I disliked this 'partisanship of the oppressed' because it forced me into a history and identity that were not mine,

4 My use of 'racism' here is polemical, which is to say I regard it primarily as a good way to break down the 'peculiarity' of the term 'communalism' (which always implies the existence of minorities as problematic), and only secondarily as an accurate description of Hindu chauvinism. Indeed as an analytical category, the word 'race' here – as elsewhere and everywhere – can only stand as a problem but always as a *problem which will not go away*

I simultaneously felt guilty for resisting assimilation. And this made me feel worse. Eventually I found myself regularly denying my Muslimhood and changing my name in order to be comfortable socially and secure politically. I must stress that there is nothing extraordinary in these precautions: for while my dissimulation was generally a personal effort to retain individuality and maintain my lines of communication with non-Muslims, I was also nearly lynched in Ahmedabad station by saffron-clad young men off to Ayodhya to destroy a mosque – and this only because I happened to be carrying a book of Urdu poetry A Hindu friend of mine suffered a similar experience upon emerging from the 'Muslim' Khuda Bakhsh library in Patna Such incidents, which form the staple of Muslim conversation, are ignored by everyone else. July last, for instance, a seventeen-year-old Muslim boy was picked up by the Bombay police on no charge and beaten to death in jail. There was a sit-in at the police station later, and because the incident occurred during the election campaign, a couple of candidates took an interest; but the affair was soon swept under the rug. Most worrying, however, was the fact that while the Urdu dailies covered the story in detail, it was hardly mentioned in the rest of the media, local or national

Those Muslims who stress their identity by way of beards, caps, and veils are certainly courageous, but they have at the same time cut themselves off from wider society and resigned themselves, I think, to lives within their own ghettoes And this parochialism is not merely spatial or experiential, but psychological as well Last winter, for example, I met a Muslim woman from Saharanpur at the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi Like dozens of compatriots from the country, she was camped out on the consular grounds waiting for a visitor's pass. This was during Operation Desert Storm, which had raised a whole slew of anti-imperialist demonstrations in India, and so naturally enough every conversation turned to Saddam Hussein. The women began, then, by praising the Iraqi leader as the only Muslim hero in these dark times Knowing that with the exception of the Shia, Saddam Hussein enjoyed an almost universal popularity among Indian Muslims (to the extent that Urdu publishers held back scheduled works in order to produce posters and biographies of him), I did not disagree. What she said next, however, shook me out of the complacent analysis I was making about a pan-Muslim or Third World suspicion of the West and its adventures in their territories: how many Hindus, the woman asked, has Saddam killed? When I answered none, and pointed out that his career consisted of killing other Muslims, she seemed shocked and unable to understand a scenario in which Muslims could fight anyone but Hindus The woman from Saharanpur lives in a mental ghetto, because she could not think outside of Hindu-Muslim strife her whole being was trapped in the nightmare of the Indian nation

Muslim fear leads me to the third aspect of victimhood I want to stress: a narrowing of options in all areas. By this I do not mean a set of exclusions imposed directly from the outside – such as the system of apartheid which crowds Delhi's Muslims into either the old city or the Nizamuddin locality, and confines most of Bombay's Muslim population to the neighborhoods off Muhammad Ali Road, Bandra, and Mahim. These divisions are neither 'natural' nor entirely class based, they are a deliberate ghettoization resulting from the refusal of housing societies and localities to accept Muslims (or, for that matter, Dalits, Christians, Sikhs). In Ahmedabad, for example, I heard of a Muslim man who could get accommodation only under false pretenses, and who was evicted by his landlord the moment his true identity was discovered. In the same city, certain well-to-do Muslims tried to escape the riots which regularly affect Muslim neighborhoods by moving into prosperous non-Muslim areas. During the riots last year, their homes were the only ones attacked in these localities – by their own Westernized, educated, and secular neighbors No, this kind of exclusion is bad enough, but the limitations I am referring to occur within the Muslim community.

Across the country, Muslim lives are sundered into dichotomies which permit no thought outside their confines. During the recent elections, for instance, there was a widespread fear that if the Muslim vote were to be split as it had been before, Hindu nationalists might attain more power in the possible absence of a traditional party with an overwhelming majority. This fear, which was hammered home by the Congress Party and certain sections of the press, effectively reduced Muslim political options to a single entirely negative dualism: either Congress or Hindu nationalism. Similarly, Muslim 'fundamentalist' groups play upon their co-religionists' 'siege mentality' in order to suppress all differences within the Muslim community, condemning these as dangerous. One is either a fundamentalist or a traitor to Islam In Bombay, non-Muslims and foreigners are regularly assured by many Sunnis intent on presenting a united front that there exist no Shias in the city – while in fact Shias, who are generally gathered into tightly knit, prosperous trading communities, constitute a significant percentage of Bombay's Muslim population and so excite dislike among certain of their Sunni neighbours. What these examples demonstrate is that the current 'racist' climate in India not only allows puritans to propagate an Islamic absolutism which squashes difference, it also stifles intellectual and political dialogue altogether. What remains is a frozen Manichaeanism in which one term – the Muslim – is defined entirely by another – the Hindu.

Were Indian politics not tragic, they would surely be farcical. Leaders and journalists continue to masturbate their nationalism with worn-out colonial categories such as communalism. And the image they fix on during this onanistic exercise is historical. Political thought in India is obsessed with the (national) past, and can do nothing more than replay this history over and over again. The Indian nation, after all, was built, as Ambedkar pointed out, on the myth of a historical

failure, and overcoming this failure – or this myth – has been the legitimizing task of nationalism ever since But Hindu nationalism, in dismissing the legitimacy of secularism and so the hearing power of its coercion, not only wrecks the old nationalism, but in addition recommends another, based, ironically, on the Pakistani model Such is the power of history.

And yet this history (of Partition and its massacres), although it is constantly invoked, is never really contemplated It is, in other words, an event only as confirmation for some national truism, not something problematic in its own right, not something with broader historical implications. This might explain its surprising lack of literary or artistic coverage. In effect Partition is an essentialized, Hindu and Muslim and Sikh event, not a properly historical or even human one.

As such it is naturalized, within the (pre)history of the nation-state, as an expression of primordial communalism. Furthermore it is uncommemorated because, as an event appropriated as the (pre)history of the nation-state, it can neither stand as an entity apart from it, nor upstage the simultaneous event of its freedom. Thus Delhi's Purana Qila (Old Fort), which today has been transformed into a kind of historical park frequented by lovers, bears no sign of its past as the only refuge for tens of thousands of Muslims whom the state unable otherwise to protect in its own capital during the pogroms following independence.

Insofar as Partition is problematized at all, it is done so as a 'horror' which cannot be grasped by narrative, or as a 'mindless cycle of violence'. And this simply removes the event from normality and history both by withholding rational agency from its participants, and by separating it from one's own narrative reasons It is the nation's disclaiming of responsibility for its own actions – its de-historicization of the event into something uniquely elemental And so even the 'anguish' felt over Partition, the anguish that at once absolves one of all responsibility for it and denies one's complicity in it, the anguish that takes its lead from Gandhi himself, even this anguish boils down to a sentimental regret over the nation's division (wrought by others), and to a ridiculous rhetoric of 'if only we could love each other'. Indian anguish, then, seems primarily to be a national rather than a human emotion, one concerning the country's loss and not the particular losses of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs – which are lessened in the process. For Pakistan, on the other hand, Partition constitutes the prehistory of its victory, and is thus dealt with, apparently, less in terms of a national than a human loss.[5]

All this does not mean that the events of Partition were not traumatic individually, or that this trauma is suppressed or appropriated by the nation-state, only that it occurs not as horror or anguish, but in the very banality of survival narratives: for instance in the short stories of Sa'adat Hasan Manto. Horror and anguish, as Hannah Arendt has pointed out, are not 'natural' but created *ex post facto* by a particular kind of remembering. The commemoration of an atrocity, therefore, together with the emotion it gives rise to, is a political act and not merely a psychological one. Perhaps this explains the real lack of horror or anguish in the Indian subcontinent at what was in fact genocide because in South Asia genocide is written as the history of the nation-state and commemorated only as such – which is to say only as the travails of freedom Whereas for Europe, therefore, the Nazi holocausts might signify a failure of history or progress, for India the holocaust of Partition is simply absorbed into the very teleology of history as an atavism. Whereas for Europe holocaust might be problematized as the failure of modernism or enlightenment, for India holocaust is problematized only in terms of a particular failure of the nation-state, and not of nationalism (not to mention modernity or enlightenment) in general.

After Rajiv Gandhi's assassination last year, large billboards appeared in Bombay supposedly depicting his identity papers – papers in which the space for 'religion' was filled in with 'Indian'. The coerciveness of secular nationalism is made quite obvious here: its abdication of responsibility in and for 'communalism' by displacing it onto the autonomous primordiality of others; its use of 'Indian' nationalism *against* other forms of polity or identity; and its displacement of Mr. Gandhi's murder from a politics of the state's own making (India's involvement in Sri Lanka) to the stereotyped rhetoric of a pre-national religiosity. Everything has to be communal. This attitude, of course, both *entails* a vision of the Muslim as nationalism's saboteur, and *creates* a 'Hindu' opposition that works entirely within the logic of the old nationalism – in fact as the cure for nationalism's woes The problem here, then, is not religion, nor even its colonial history, but (Indian) nationalism itself. Given the fact that the nation is not likely to wither away, however, what is needed is a less paranoid version of it – a nation that does not validate itself by raising fears of foreign hands, multinational conspiracies, and treacherous minorities.

Indian Muslims are scapegoats in a clash of nationalisms; they are the ones who bear the nation's burden of guilt and failure What can they do in such a situation? Autonomous political organizations are vital, but are they possible in a country which lives in fear of 'another Pakistan'? Perhaps not. But then is it also possible to continue to rely on the state's increasingly desultory protection? Is it desirable? There is a slogan used by Hindu nationalists. *jao Pakistan ya kabristan* (go to Pakistan or go to the grave). Since neither of these prospects seems particularly attractive, the only option left is to organize. How this is to be done is another matter – certainly fighting Muslim absolutists and trying to open channels of communication with non-Muslims (even Hindu nationalists) is part of it. But the first step is surely to wrench oneself free from the seductive rhetoric of Indian nationalism, a rhetoric which, in eliciting a Muslim discourse of apology and denial, simply perpetuates their victimhood.

5 This paragraph is the result of a discussion with Rizwan Ahmad

Books

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM: Hindus and Muslims in India by Peter van der Veer. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996.

RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM CONFRONTS THE SECULAR STATE by Mark Juergensmeyer Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994

WITH the votaries of political Hinduism/cultural nationalism/positive secularism and what have you, the BJP-Shiv Sena combine with more than marginal help from the 'socialist' George Fernandes' Samata Party and Emergency villain Bansi Lal's Haryana Vikas Party standing at the *dahleez* of national power – the perennial question of our future as a 'secular' country has once again occupied center-stage. True, this combine has not done as well as it, or even many psephologists, predicted As analyst Yogendra Yadav, in one of the innumerable TV programmes on the eleventh general elections, pointed out the BJP led combine has not been given a social mandate to rule Their combined vote base is still narrow both in social and regional terms. But, and this is equally important, the political forces which are now aggressively espousing their secular credentials and arguing for an alliance with the sole objective of keeping the BJP out of central power, carry little conviction Just try and recollect Congress (I) general secretary B P. Maurya's frenzied assertion that the mandate is for the secular forces to join and provide a stable government

Whether or not the BJP combine will keep its militant Hindu ranks and ideologues under effective check if it stays in power, it is more than evident that majority opinion in the country has become far more communitarian and 'anti-secular' (at least as regards the 'official' understanding of this much-contested term). Not just the 'minority' cultural and religious grouping, but equally the 'majority', including the elites, are today more prone to assert their cultural/ethnic/religious identity in matters both transcendental and secular. And while one is not arguing that this BJP led shift in the terms of discourse is comparable to the Jamait-e-Islami influence in neighbouring Pakistan (the difference in their vote shares notwithstanding), clearly the privileging of the national, secular, modern individual governed by material self-interests as the building block of our polity and nation is under severe contestation.

In a manner of speaking, this tendency, both within the country and globally, has been in evidence for some time now. The mix of religion and nationalism, which the West has so proudly announced as vanquished, and which we were so keen to keep out of our experiment at state and nation-building, will need to be rethought. Be it the growth of Islamization in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the rise of Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism in Sri Lanka, the 'bloody' fight for Khalistan in the Punjab, or the intensifying conflict between politically constructed blocs of Hindus and Muslims at home – we clearly are at the threshold of a re-definition.

It is thus not surprising that the one theme our scholarly community has been deeply engaged with is one of the dynamics and future of religious nationalism. Be it the polemical tracts of Belgian theologian Koenraad Elst, the writings of Arun Shourie, the late Girilal Jain (*The Hindu Phenomenon*); the Centre for Policy Studies, Madras volume called *Ayodhya and the Future India*, or the more scholarly writings of Gyanendra Pandey (*The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*; *Hindus and Others*), the S. Gopal edited volume, *Anatomy of a Confrontation*, Sandria Frietag's masterly *Collective Action and Community*, Ainslie Embree's *Utopias in Conflict*, Ashis Nandy's *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism* and *Creating a Nationality*, or the controversial third volume *Struggle for Hegemony in India* by Shashi Joshi and Bhagwan Singh Josh – all these and many more have tried, with varying success to move across theological, historical and political debates in

an effort to provide some clarity to the vexed question of our future as a secular, composite culture nation.

Both Mark Juergensmeyer and Peter van der Veer are familiar names to those engaged with understanding this problem. In this more recent offering, Juergensmeyer provides a global scanning of the slow decline of secular nationalism, and links the increasing power of religious nationalism to both popular struggles against western cultural imperialism and morality. He includes attempts by serious political activists to re-read and re-fashion both history and the present to re-formulate the modern languages and strategies of politics in order to provide a new basis and legitimacy for the nation-state.

While unlike many of the modern secularlists, Mark Juergensmeyer avoids the trap of lapsing into moral judgementalism about religious nationalism, his quick-scan survey of a wide range of contexts – the Middle East, the erstwhile Soviet republics and South Asia – leads him to a position that is deeply sceptical of the claims about democracy and human rights, both of individuals and minority groups, within modern states imbued with religious nationalism, whether or not they become formally theocratic *a la* Iran, Pakistan or Israel. His comments on the Ayodhya movement or the Sikh war in Punjab are clearly apprehensive, and he does feel that the Punjab/Sikh problem remains unresolved, because 'these religious activists all deem India's political structure as illegitimate because secular politics does not encourage candidates to be based in a religious community or claim credibility through cultural ties.' While he does grant some positives to religious nationalism, such as appreciation of tradition and historical rootedness, or the insistence on grounding public institutions in morality, he is firm in his analysis of the real possibility of clash between religious and secular laws (particularly personal laws), the assumption of religious nationalists that certain lands are the province of only one religion, and about the exaltation of communitarian values over individual ones Thus 'there can ultimately be no true convergence between secular and religious political ideologies', and 'a new cold war will persist' What he also puts paid to is the future of multi-religious (or is it multi-national?) states.

The weakness of this book lies in its inability to work through the tension between these competing visions or ideologies This is partly because Mark Juergensmeyer takes the religious pronouncements of their proponents too literally. He does not engage sufficiently with the political semiotics of religious language and symbols He thus cannot work out the real differences between the more hard core Khomenists' and, say, the followers of Rafsanjani. Or in neighbouring Pakistan, he cannot appreciate the merit of introducing gender just criteria/interpretations within Muslim family law. What we end up with, to take a situation closer home, is the blurring of any distinction and therefore of interventionist politics, between a VHP activist and the BJP.

Given the centrality of the Hindu-Muslim political encounter to our future, Peter van der Veer's book excites greater attention. Readers may recollect his prescient article 'God Must be Liberated: A Hindu Liberation Movement in Ayodhya' (Modern Asia Studies, 1987), which had provided delightful insights into the early phase of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement. It was his pointing out of the fears of the *mahants* of other temples about being eclipsed by the movement, that not only demonstrated the fractures within the Hindu religious opinion, but also explained why the Ayodhya movement always enjoyed greater popularity/ support outside Ayodhya than within. An insight that Ashis Nandy and others developed with great advantage in their *Creating a Nationality*.

As an outsider, Van der Veer is wary of taking strong stances. Having spent a long time working on Ayodhya and the Ramnandi sect, he is pained by the politicisation of the city. Like Juergensmeyer, he finds it difficult to condemn religious nationalists, even though he finds their protestations about Hindu tolerance and Gandhian non-violence more than a little stretched.

Without going over the familiar ground of the specific Ayodhya dispute, whether a temple existed earlier at the site of the now demolished mosque, Van der Veer's study becomes useful in the manner in which it works through and synthesizes the ongoing debate on ethnicity, religion and nationalism. For a start, he disagrees with the Dumontian reading of traditional India as essentially religious. Nor does he agree with the view that we had a syncretist or harmonious past which British colonialism disturbed, giving rise to the current communal conflict. What he does admit, in the line of Gyanendra Pandey and Rashmi Pant, is that a combination of orientalist scholarship and the colonial state, through a process of enumeration of castes and communities central to their social policy, took earlier formations, modified them and imbued them with a new role. We thus got the construction of majorities and minorities, but not solely as a result of British machinations. He does emphasize that religion, past, culture, sacred geography and so on, played a vital role in all Indian imaginings of the nation. Thus while religion and religious organisation had for long been part of our society, in the altered circumstances religious nationalism took birth as a new force.

Van der Veer then takes up the question of religious formations – the role of saints and ascetic orders, of ritual communication through pilgrimages et al. He demonstrates, and convincingly, in the case of both Islam and Hinduism that trade, conquest and missionary activities went together. Thus the oft-cited differences between *sufis* (as representing syncretic developments) and Muslim rulers are clearly over-stated. As is the notion that sufism represents a challenge to orthodox Islam. All this is central to the ongoing controversy about conversions, and thus feeds into current anxieties about the role of Gulf money in spreading Islam. Van der Veer points out that this distinction between indig-

enous vs foreigner/convert is as central to Hinduism, both in its own history of incorporation and expansion as also now in the role of the NRI Hindus. It may be noted that this process is equally applicable to the Sikhs, particularly in the Khalistani agitation

What is important in this account is the role of religious orders and ritual communication in the growth of both the community and religious nationalism, a point often missed out in our debates Van der Veer examines in some detail the trajectories of different sufi orders, Hindu sects, the role of the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj, the Sikh sects – to show that across religions the processes of expansion and consolidation, interaction with the state, merger of material and spiritual issues are not very different Thus the oft-cited differences between religions of the book and others may be somewhat overdrawn.

Equally fascinating is his discussion of time, of facts, of modes of proving one's case when looking at the debate between the secularists and the anti-secularists. Those who followed the Ayodhya debate may remember the passions generated over archaeology, over whether the current Ayodhya was the same as Ram's Ayodhya, or whether any evidence of habitation existed during *Treta Yug* and so on. He points out that while Hindu discourse often tries to avoid historical referentiality, there is simultaneously an attempt to narrate sequences of historical events and to make this narration suit a contemporary ideological purpose. The point is that one cannot equate or rank these two discourses, or use one to discredit the other.

The issues raised in this book are ultimately connected to the problem of the interpretation of history and culture. By moving away from the givens, the hegemonic interpretations of both the nation and religion, and by locating them in their complex and concrete histories – Peter Van der Veer sensitizes us to the problem of memory, of remembering and forgetting in our reconstructing of myths – both secular and religious In doing so, he problematizes both history as fact and as a craft and culture – both of which he postulates as dynamic constructions in which politics, power, the state as also ritual pilgrimage et al play an essential role. It is thus we can understand the different implications of the Munshi-Patel reconstruction of Somnath and its easy absorption into nationalist historiography and the violent conflict over Ayodhya The rationale behind Advani's *rath yatra*, too, becomes clearer.

Van der Veer is also uneasy with the analytical separation that Ashis Nandy makes between religious discourse and religious nationalism, between religion as faith and religion as ideology This he feels makes too clear-cut a distinction between Hinduism and Hindutva, between an unadulterated culture found in rural areas and a westernized reformist ideology found in the cities or abroad. In fact, he sees Nandy's proposition of the Indian world-view as tolerant and non-bounded and as flowing from the same orientalist discourse that informed Vivekananda and now the VHP. He thus disagrees with a popular view that Indian culture at the grassroots is syncretist and that one needs political intervention from the outside in order to draw communal boundaries. For him, tolerance and syncretism belong to discursive strategies that try to determine national culture. Thus while Hindu and Muslim religious communities existed before the colonial interventions, and were often antagonistic, it is only with the nationalist discourses of the 19th century that they were sought to be transformed into nations – a process that remains unfinished and will always be partial

It is not clear where this dense scholarly work leaves us, particularly vis-a-vis anxieties about our proximate future To put it more sharply, will the coming in of a BJP led coalition at the centre, with its programme of building a Ram mandir at Ayodhya, possibly altering the status of the mosques of Kashi and Mathura, pushing through a uniform civil code, disbanding the Minorities Commission, getting rid of Article 370 in the contest of Kashmir among others – all central to its proclamation and image as a party imbued with cultural/religious nationalism – mean an end of India as we have so far known? To these fears, this book provides no answers. It does not even confront the Bhagwan Josh-Shashi Joshi thesis that once Hindu hegemony is accepted, the minorities will acquiesce to the new order, and conflicts of a communal kind will decline. What it does do is to sensitize us to the complexities of the process, and makes us more sceptical and wary of the easy claims being made on either side of the ideological divide. Clearly, we are likely to witness growing minority and secular anxieties, even if the B. P Maurya forecasts of doom are unwarranted. As with many of these deeper processes, the struggle both among and within competing ideological blocs will continue.

Harsh Sethi

ETHNIC IDENTITIES AND FEDERALISM by A S Narang. Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1995

THE BOOK under review supports the view, familiar by now in academic and scholarly circles, that multi-cultural and multi-ethnic states should look towards a politics of accommodation if they are to survive as viable political entities. Federalism as a structure of governance is best suited to provide space for this politics of accommodation. As the author says, 'The only realistic way, therefore, is to contain the ethnic groups within multi-ethnic state. And for that the proper mechanism is "federalism" providing "self-rule" in some areas and "shared-rule" in others' (p 212).

The plan of the book is first to discuss the evolution of the concept of ethnicity from its early anthropological usage to describe race to the broadening of the concept to encapsulate cultural formations. This discussion on ethnicity then looks at the various ethnic assertions around the world,

examines the causes of ethnic upheavals and evaluates theoretical as well as political responses to them

This is followed by a chapter on the evolution of the federal idea through the early interpretation of federalism which provided for a limited centre and fairly powerful states to the more complex forms of federalism which arose out of the actual practice of various states where water-tight compartments increasingly gave way to a series of intertwining powers. Federalism is seen as a form which provides mechanisms for conflict resolution in plural societies and thereby a political system which makes democracy possible

These ideas form the framework within which the Canadian, Indian and Soviet experiences are evaluated. The three chapters which examine these experiences, as indeed the ones that precede, provide ample evidence of the author's mastery over the source material. Students of the subject will find reference to every important theoretical as well as constitutional debate on the subjects handled here

The Canadian case discusses the attempts to control and accommodate French ethno-nationalism It shows the considerable stress which Canada is going through and supports the view that greater power-sharing between Quebec and Ottawa may be the only answer. The Indian case is seen as one of a highly centralised federalism and the discussion of the Soviet case with its catastrophic denouement is, as it were, a message about what could happen to India if it did not appreciate the imperatives of federalism in a multi-cultural society.

An important argument that the book puts forth is that the creation of federal structures and federal constitutions are not enough. A political commitment to run the polity as a federal one is of the essence Or else expectations are created among ethnic groups which are denied in actual practice Political contradictions thus get built up in the process which become unmanageable Therefore, federal structures also call for good federal management.

If the book is seen as a policy prescription there is very little one could argue against. However, as an objective scholarly treatise on the subject of ethnicity and federalism the book begs the question as to why there are many ethnic situations which are not amenable to federal solutions. Federal solutions are, in fact, available only when ethnic or cultural groups are fairly large and are also territorially concentrated. Where ethnic groups are widely dispersed over the polity, for example African Americans in the U.S., the solutions to their political assertiveness are not federal On the other hand, where there are very small but territorially based ethnic groups, such as the ethnic mosaic in India's North East, the solution may not lie in federal accommodation Other mechanisms have to be found. The Indian Constitution does envisage such solutions through Schedule VI of the Constitution and other development councils and autonomous councils for specially designated regions

Sometimes even these do not easily work However, the main difficulty with the author's approach is that he does not sufficiently establish the limits of his own prescription. Also, he does not take into consideration an emerging situation, at least in India, where economic reforms and liberalisation are bringing a whole new set of forces into motion. The paradox of the situation is that whereas liberalisation would entail a reduction in central control over the states, the pressure to bring about economic reform evenly throughout the country involves considerable central intervention. Besides, if liberalisation leads to greater inequality between states, is the ethnic situation likely to become unmanageable despite an increasingly federal articulation of the polity?

Ashis Banerjee

REPRESENTING HINDUISM: The Construction of Religious Tradition and National Identity edited by Vasudha Dalmia and Heinrich von Stietencorn. Sage Publications, Delhi, 1995.

THIS is a collection of papers from a seminar held in Tubingen, Germany, in 1990. Although the papers are linked by themes and concerns, they are, as with other similar collections, diverse in their perspectives, approaches and subject matter The book is divided into four chronological sections: Historical Perspective, Nineteenth Century Reconstructions, Images and Counter-images in the Twentieth Century and The Performing Arts and The Formation of a Pan-Indian 'Hindu' Tradition. The participants/contributors are the usual mix of Indian and western Indologists, though this particular collection of papers betrays a bias towards history and the social sciences. The 'big issues' of Indology are all represented here – caste, religion, *dharma*, nationalism, folk traditions, Orientalism et al. So are the big names: Gyan Pandey, Veena Das, Partha Chatterjee, Wilhelm Halbfass, Gunther Sontheimer and Friedhelm Hardy, among others.

Essays in published seminar collections tend to vary greatly in terms of quality as well as relevance to the theme. *Representing Hinduism* is no exception to this general formulation and the editors, Dalmia and von Stietencorn, have done an admirable job in their introduction: they put their material together in a meaningful chronology and then construct an overarching framework that binds the essays in theme and perspective. They also relate the concerns of the seminar to current political and social events in India, thereby bringing the issues of intellectual discourse out of their lofty environs and into more mainstream debate. At the same time, however, the powerful chronology in the introduction as well as the arrangement of the essays into sections show up the critical flaw in the book as a whole There is no information or analysis for the 13th to 18th centuries: that is, constructions and representations of Hinduism in Muslim India are completely absent. This would not have been an issue had the editors not chosen to

present the essays as a (complete) analytic history of Hinduism and its constructions.

The primary aim of the essays is to demonstrate that Hinduism was not a monolithic religion until it was reconstructed as such in the late 19th century. This thesis, that Indian culture was self-consciously pluralistic, is enlarged in order to counteract the proponents of Hindutva who seek to remake Hinduism and Indian culture into a homogenised, unified tradition. A number of essays deal with the diversity of religious traditions that flourished in the subcontinent within the construct of what we now call Hinduism. Friedhelm Hardy suggests that the Tamil and the Sanskritic religions were entirely different because later Tamil traditions rejected the Vedas. von Stietencorn shows that Vaisnavism and Saivism saw themselves as separate from each other rather than as sects of the same religion. Dharmapal-Frick demonstrates that caste was a fluid category, used and understood differently by different people.

The second section of the book develops the central idea further, relating Hinduism and nationalism, especially as they determined questions of identity and otherness with regard to the colonial rulers. Once 'Hinduism' as a unitary system gets reified, a systematic anti-Muslim rhetoric begins to emerge, as demonstrated in early Bengali 'histories' and social theories. Partha Chatterjee's essay as well as those by Burghart, Dalmia and Kaviraj discuss the conflation of Hinduism and nationalism in the quest for a separate and 'glorious' identity.

The issue of defining and constructing identity continues into the next section as well. Javeed Alam's investigation of how Muslim separatist rhetoric has grown in Hyderabad and Veena Das, in her exposition of militant Sikh discourse, provide necessary and interesting counterpoints to the material on the development of Hindu identity. Gyan Pandey's essay, 'The Appeal of Hindu History' is particularly illuminating in its analysis of the rhetoric found in Ayodhya pamphlets. Gunther Sontheimer's notes on folk religion and its connection with a larger Hindu milieu are extremely provocative and indicate directions in which such a discussion could be valuably pursued. It is unfortunate that his untimely death prevented his observations from being developed into a more substantial paper.

The last section of the book, on performance traditions and the arts, is the weakest. The essays (by Anuradha Kapur, Roma Chatterji and Angelika Malinar) are diffuse and unconnected with the overall project of the collection This is despite the fact that the subjects they cover (Parsi theatre companies, the Chhau dance tradition and the *Bhagavadgita* on television) could have been meaningfully integrated into questions of identity and construction. This additional dimension could have enhanced the historical and textual material of the other essays. Kapur and Chatterji resort to the comfort of established critical vocabulary when they might have, instead, deepened the layers of interpretation available to them.

It is clear that the agenda of *Representing Hinduism* is to confront the monolithic Hinduism constructed by contemporary Hindutva activists and intellectuals. The essays which take this issue head-on make the point that inclusionary definitions of Hinduism (those that encompass nation, caste and religious practice) are of relatively recent origin and have clear historical contexts. Ironically, however, the data available to prove this displays the same rhetoric as the Hindutva movement: that the term 'Hindu' was more meaningful and more commonly used as a nation-related concept than it was as a religion-related idea.

None of the essays that develop this line of argument contend with the fact that their analysis could fuel the very engine they seek to derail. On the contrary, they (inadvertently) provide a legitimating *parampara* for these recent constructions. von Stietencorn himself uses 'Hindu' as a descriptive term for a geographical and cultural entity. Partha Chatterjee's essay, 'History and the Nationalisation of Hinduism', foregrounds even more clearly that Hinduism was a political rather than a religious concept in its early incarnations. Friedhelm Hardy's rather petulant polemic against the essentialist tendencies of 'traditional Indology' is sadly misplaced. The same homogenising and essentialising perspectives have long been appropriated by the Hindu right.

It is also unfortunate that this collection of papers was published five years after the seminar that generated them. The intervening years have thrown up new issues in the discourse about history, its appropriation and its constructions. Perhaps the issue that needs to be confronted systematically and urgently now is the growing attack on the theory of Aryan invasions presented by Hindutva intellectuals. Their highly developed anti-invader rhetoric, as well as their construction of a glorious past, demands that Aryans be indigenous to the subcontinent. As the stakes for public discourse get higher and it becomes more and more critical to control the spaces and vocabulary of such discourse, the debates over history and rival claims for its ownership become vital. The attitudes and approaches present in *Representing Hinduism* are a step in the right direction as constantly shifting battle lines take us deeper into hostile territory.

Arshia Sattar

MUSLIM COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH ASIA: Culture, Society and Power edited by T. N. Madan. Manohar, New Delhi, 1995.

THE contributors to the volume were invited to address the question of Muslim identity in the region in cultural and sociological rather than religious (or theological) terms. The volume follows the tradition of sociological/anthropological writings on 'Muslims in India' which focuses on the highly differentiated (as opposed to an internal monolith)

view of Muslims The writings are premised on the assumption that the Muslim communities in South Asia have scarcely been locked up in the theological construct that the Muslim communities are constituted within the mosaic of ethnic plurality in their respective societies. The question 'What does it mean to be a Muslim in South Asia?' has evoked at least two answers in recent history. The textual and essentialist, according to which one is a Muslim by affirmation of the fundamental levels of faith and through adherence to basic behavioural obligations. This community of faith and practice organises Muslims into a monolith community.

In contradistinction to the first, the second answer, sociologically informed, forms the unstated premise of the contributors to the volume. According to this view, a person is a Muslim not only by what he believes but also, and even more importantly, by what he *does*. The emphasis on actual behaviour brings to sharper resolution the internal differentiations of both social and cultural, as well as the varieties of historical and local contexts which partly account for the gap between the scriptural Islam and Islam-as-practised

It is relevant to recall that the notion that Muslims are an internally homogeneous, monolith group, provided the ideological foundation to the two-nation theory. Its basic claim was that the Hindu and Muslim communities were socially and culturally different from each other and that a meaningful preservation of the Muslim identity required the protection of an organised Muslim state. Several historical studies subscribed to this view as the initial premise of their analysis Notable among these are K. K. Aziz's *The Making of Pakistan* (1967) and Hafeez Malik's *Moslem Nationalism in India and Pakistan* (1963) The contrary notion that Muslims are not a monolith community found a natural anchorage in the Indian situation where about forty million Muslims exercised their will in favour of retaining membership of Indian society The present volume needs to the understood against this intellectual backdrop

According to the editor, the essays comprising the present volume may be understood in terms of three key themes in the sociology of South Asian Muslim communities, namely: *i*) attributes of cultural identity, *ii*) modes of social organisation, and *iii*) dimensions of power. As a textual construct, Islam is presented as faith (religion); a way of life (culture and society) and power (holy law and state) in one seamless whole But the present contributions bring out strains between these different aspects The diverse and meaningful ways in which society, culture and power are interrelated among Muslim communities in South Asia constitute the challenge before the present volume

The language of discourse of the mosaic view of Muslim communities lays great emphasis on the diffuse concretions of textually precise Islam, and the varied departures in lives of Muslims from their official dogma. Such an exercise highlights the shared spaces in the social and cultural expression of faith If Muslim communities exhibit a gap between the *sharia* and their life, it is seen as sufficient proof of their authentic membership in the shared mosaic of everyday life in Indian society. Here one needs to recollect the nature of stereotypes about Muslims the Partition had created. Born within the mindset of the two-nation theory, these even drew credibility from those scholars who ostensibly disagreed with the separated view of ethnic communities. The stereotype tells us that if Muslims display a minimum gap between the religious faith and its practice then the shared social and cultural spaces which they enjoy with other communities/world also be minimal. Repudiating the stereotype necessitates that Muslims in India be relocated (here anthropologically/sociologically) in the fabric of Indian society. Hitherto faith and its practice are shown as pure sectors of mutual fidelity. But the sociological representations have shown the mutual divergence involving a rich blending of plural religious traditions

The demonstration of the position that Muslims resemble other ethnic communities, in no way satisfies an understanding of the major cleavages in Indian society which beset the Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and which surpass the communal cleavages per se in their intensity and salience.

Considering that the various intellectual and moral issues are today themselves internationalised, it is possible to argue that the reality of Indian Muslims should be mapped beyond the confines of the debate between the Islamicist's and sociologist's positions. If one ventures to wriggle out of these divergent views, one may question if the factor of religion and/or ethnicity alone are enough to understand the historical possibilities that circumscribe and empower the members of the little tradition of Islam. Surely the map on which the Indian Muslims may be located is international in scope and projects the Muslim reality more in the garb of a human reality

The ascendancy of majoritarian identity and the processes of globalisation undermine the emotive as well as institutional commitment to the social and cultural mosaic of communities within the nation-state. How do ethnic communities reconstitute themselves when the state is eroded by globalisation in terms of its political sovereignty and cultural hegemony?

In the present scenario, where global pressures are challenging Muslims to review their emotive and ideological commitments towards oneself and others, there is a need to change the language of discourse It requires a thorough disengagement from the mode of presenting a polyvalent religious creed and its complex social manifestation The post modernisation of culture and globalisation of politics has not only simplified faith (to the chagrin of official secularists) and its concretions but also created a larger shared public space where the citizenship of an individual is constituted Muslims as citizens have more in common with scheduled castes and scheduled tribes compared to what the anthropology of *jajmani* system suggests.

The threatened spaces in the public life are those where various communities seek common entitlements as citizen's or human rights Surely one is not invoking citizenship as part of political or juridical definition. Instead, the analysis is focused on the social and cultural process and practices which enable (or disable) a citizen to participate in the national culture How do threatened spaces metamorphosise into an essentially religious idiom and what medium is thereby created for the salience and intensity of a simplified faith? The gradual bridging together of the belief and observance of *sharia* among Muslim communities should not baffle sociologists. It may be viewed, in part, as a cultural strategy to combat the gap between citizen's rights and human rights or the contravention of both within the larger processes of exclusion and marginalisation of various minorities and ethnic groups.

The reproduction of essays from old issues of *Contributions to Indian Sociology* does indeed cater to the continued existence of the intellectual need to disentangle the enigma called the Muslim communities of South Asia. However, it is the perspective engaging social scientists that needs a thorough revision.

Mohammad Talib

STUDIES OF INDIAN JEWISH IDENTITY edited by Nathan Katz Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1995

THIS collection of essays chronicles the story a people tell themselves about themselves through a study of the 'other'. Written by American Jewish scholars, it is a reflexive endeavour where American Jewry is invited to see reflections of themselves in the lives of the Jews from India: the Jews from Cochin, the Bene Israel, and the Baghdadi Jews.

The essays purport, at one level, to follow in the tradition of scholarship that views the Jews as a series of locally defined people. Hence, the authors attempt to establish the authenticity of the Indian Jews as being 'fully' Jewish despite being Indian. At another level, the authors foreground their work against the idea of a Jewish identity in general. An important constituent, we are told, of this Jewish identity 'in general' is 'the cancer of anti-semitism'. Indian Jewish identity is seen as being uniquely constituted in that it articulated itself in a relatively friendly environment Despite the bid to give legitimacy to a minuscule section of world Jewry, it is somewhat surprising to be presented with the idea of a monolithic Jewish identity in general (which is never defined) against which Indian Jewish identity is mapped. Given the schisms in world Jewry along various lines one would have expected the editor to uphold the argument that there exist various Jewish *identities* today, rather than any single universally valid Jewish identity.

Given this preoccupation, the essays successfully explore the Indian variant of Jewish identity. One facet of this hyphenated identity explored is whether the Jewish community in India can be understood in terms of the sociological category of caste. Katz and Goldberg provide a fascinating account of the manner in which the Jews of Cochin strategised to create a niche for themselves within the caste system Claiming to be a high caste, the Jews of Cochin appropriated two traditional sources of status – the models of the ascetic and the royal – for their enactment of ritual at traditional Jewish holidays. While the Jews of Cochin Indianised their Jewish ritual, the Baghdadi Jews attempted to define themselves as foreign to India. The third community discussed, the Bene Israel, were subject to the mechanics of the caste system and were ascribed a lower status by virtue of their occupation as oil pressers

While these essays are ethnographically rich, they are all accounts from the within. The politics of categorization and the role played by the dominant community in ascribing an identity are never fully discussed, except in the case of the Bene Israel. A discussion of Dumont's principle of encompassment where each caste is defined in relation to the whole is conspicuous by its absence. Moreover, the attempt to analyse the Jews within the framework of the caste system is somewhat half-hearted, as each author starts from the premise that the Jews of India distinguished themselves as a religious community who came to be conscious of themselves as an ethnic nationality with the creation of the state of Israel.

Interestingly enough, while the authors attempt to highlight the Indianness of the Jews of India within India, this Indianness is highlighted by the Jews themselves when away from India. Barbara Johnson follows the Paradesi Jews of Cochin to the state of Israel and describes their conscious articulation of themselves as Indian in their celebration of festivals, their food and cuisine, melodies used for prayer and more importantly in deciding who can be invited to communal parties. This articulation of the 'Indian' features of their Jewish identity by the Jews of Cochin defies the nationalist attempt at homogenization of identities, especially in the state of Israel which has sought to create a new 'Israeli' identity by absorbing the various immigrants into one dominant identity.

The book has more to offer if considered as a study of migrant communities – in this case of communities who are twice migrant – and the pool of resources that such communities access in order to constitute themselves. The ethnography on the Bene Israel is an excellent example of the way in which communities remember and reinvent themselves even in the absence of a written text. However, there is no attempt by the authors to engage in a critical discussion of the way in which symbols from the past are used by these communities to define their present.

On the whole, this collection of essays is an important contribution to the study of Indian-Jewish identity. More importantly, it celebrates the tenacity of a people who have sought to define themselves as a single people despite their

dispersion from their own land Here the Jews of India present us with ethnographic data of another case of seeing themselves as part of an imagined community prior to the existence of the political apparatus of the nation-state.

Lisa Radhika Kaul

A NATION IN TURMOIL: Nationalism and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1937-1958 by Yunus Samad Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1995.

IT IS now accepted wisdom that the emergence of Pakistan was the greatest failure of the Indian national movement – a failure that looms large even after almost half a century of independence. A so-called inter-community dispute has transformed itself into an international one and has yet to be resolved. This gives rise to doubts about whether the creation of a new nation-state was ever the answer to the patterns of elite competition for political power that developed in the twilight of the Raj; perhaps the high level bargain, as historian Sumit Sarkar calls it, between the British and the Indian National Congress and Muslim League that resulted in freedom with partition was a solution arrived at by political exigencies and short-term reflex actions on the part of the leaders of communities rather than by a uniform or widespread hankering for a separate homeland. No wonder then that the Pakistan idea remains doctrinally somewhat deficient And Samad's book is part of the continuing soul searching on the part of Pakistani scholars to locate where the deficiencies sprang from and why the military-bureaucratic oligarchy was able to consolidate its hold on the Pakistani state, even as India settled into irreversible, if tumultuous, democracy.

Yunus Samad's thesis is that there are historical continuities between the events, strategies and political mobilization of the pre-partition years and the afflictions of modern Pakistan. Samad asserts that the force of Muslim nationalism was one that was largely galvanized by the seekers of political spoils. It did not grow organically but was in a sense imposed from above by those who set out to position themselves as sole spokesmen for subcontinental Muslims and tried to set themselves up as equal counterweights to Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. Thus Muslim nationalism was never fully harmonious with regional interpretations and perceptions. The idea of Pakistan was ambiguous from the start, indeed there was political advantage in letting it remain as vague and ill-defined as it was. So the reason why the Islamic republic is neither really Islamic nor a republic is because its inception was fatally flawed, that a centralizing system was forcibly imposed on subcontinental Muslim politics which was always decentralized and region-specific. This, according to Samad remains the fundamental problem of Pakistan today. that an inept centralization sits by brute force on an inherently centrifugal political culture

Yet it may be pointed out that the analysis of the Pakistani nation as one that demonstrates a tragic gap between rhetoric and reality, where the nation-state that was finally born quickly began to become quite different from the one originally promised by its founders, is not an entirely original point. The historian Ayesha Jalal has written in *The State of Martial Rule: The origins of Pakistan's Political Economy of Defence*. 'Jinnah's resort to religion was not an ideology to which he was ever committed or even a device to use against rival communities; it was simply a way of giving semblance of unity and solidity to his divided Muslim constituents.' Jalal holds that the role of Islam in the process leading up to the partition of India was to amplify and dignify what remained from the first to the last a political struggle launched by the Muslim League under the secular leadership of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Samad also concludes that once Pakistan was secured, the League was faced with unforeseen difficulties in enforcing its authority, harmonizing the strong currents of regionalism and establishing a legititmate centre.

Samad's overall exposition in explaining how the military oligarchy came to exercise such a stranglehold on the Pakistani state and why Pakistan broke into two barely a few decades after the inauguration of the supposed homeland for Muslims gives centrality to the fact that the Pakistan slogan meant different things to different people, aspirations which the founding party simply could not satisfy. To the Muslim peasant in Bengal and Punjab, Pakistan was presented as the end of Hindu *zamindar* (landlord) and *bania* (trade) exploitation. To the small Muslim business class, Pakistan contained the promise of heading off a part of India from competition by the established Hindu professional class.

To the nascent Muslim intelligentsia there were promises of employment, yet for Jinnah and the League the Pakistan slogan was simply a rather cynical means to attain all India stature. Samad provides a detailed account of political machinations by which Jinnah sought to align himself with regional Muslim parties. He unravels the precarious manner in which the League tried to co-opt local groups in the United Provinces, Bengal, Punjab and Sind in order to gain pre-eminence in India. Samad notes, as others before him, that the great post-war revival of the League's fortunes had more to do with the fact that a large number of Congress leaders were in jail, than any positive platform of its own. The famous resolution of 23 March 1940 drafted by Sikandar Hayat Khan 'that the areas in which the Muslims are in a majority as in the north-western and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute independent states...' grew more out of an ideological vacuum and the need for a bargaining counter, rather than a concerted drive to secure a different country.

From the democratic elections of 1937 to the failure of democracy in 1958, Samad's work is detailed in its account of politics, political strategies and the calculations

of Muslim leaders as they sought to create unity where there was none. Indeed the book's strongest point is its mastery of the provincial politics in the years under study and the deep research into the haphazard manner by which a 'Muslim' leadership was forged. There is a wealth of detail on the construction of the Pakistan demand; but the broad hypothesis is neither new nor very provocative.

There is also an omission. In considering the pattern of Muslim politics on either side of 1947, Samad pays scant attention to the influence of Hindu communalism on Muslim alignments. The fact that the Congress was simply unable to curb communal utterances by certain important leaders like Malviya, that even a secular politician like Motilal Nehru sometimes descended to appealing to voters on communal lines surely had a profound impact on the growth of Muslim separatism

Sagarika Ghose

HINDU NATIONALISTS IN INDIA: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party by Yogendra K Malik and V.B. Singh. Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1994

FOR Hindu nationalists, synonyms of the BJP-RSS family, Hinduism is not a mere religion but the fountainhead of Indian civilisation and culture. They feel that Hinduism should be given central place in the ideology of Indian nationalism The Nehruvian model of democracy, which the authors describe as Indian nationalism (different from Hindu nationalism), is out of tune with the culture of the people as it did not conform to their beliefs, values and shared perception. Thus it is unlikely to become part of the people's psychological make-up Hinduism and the BJP's political ideology revolving around it, on the other hand, will be the political phenomenon of tomorrow's India. The renewed assertion of Hindu nationalism in the 1980s has not only led to the rejection of the Nehruvian concept of secularism but has actually helped in redefining Indian national identity. The concept of a Hindu Rashtra will only be the logical product of this movement.

Using BJP handouts and writings of friendly journalists and columnists, the authors have banked upon the outcome of the last two general elections – 1989 and 1991 – to come to the above conclusion and interpretation But their research and approach suffer from a lack of seriousness and objectivity, evident from their choice of material. In the process, they ignore certain developments and twist others. The book covers the first 13 years of the BJP (April 1980-November 1993) The first five years under Atal Behari Vajpayee are seen as a disappointing phase followed by L K Advani's takeover which lifted the party from a shambles to where it is now The authors clearly feel that despite internal contradictions and differences among the various units of the RSS family and the BJP leaders, they, as representatives of the majority community, have the right to set future goals for the Indian state.

In fact, the Hindu leaders, while founding a political party in the early 1950s, were aware of this potential and its revival in the form of the Bharatiya Janata Party – after a three-year merger in the Janata Dal – only vindicated their hope and dream The Jan Sangh did not have many admirers yet it managed to derive political benefit even in those hostile circumstances While opposition leaders and stalwarts like Ram Manohar Lohia and Jaya Prakash Narayan gave legitimacy to the Jan Sangh as an opposition party by making it a partner in the broad anti-Congress opposition coalition in the late 1960s, while Indira Gandhi in the early 1980s gave legitimacy to its ideology by publicly participating in the Ekatmata Yagna organised by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

The '80s also saw the rise of militancy in Punjab and Kashmir and the centre's extra-constitutional intervention there. Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984 robbed the country and the Congress of the strongest personality they had. Despite an unprecedented majority, the Bofors scandal rocked the Rajiv boat beyond repair, paving the way for V P Singh in the 1989 elections where the BJP, like the left parties, supported the minority government from outside with the BJP ultimately wanting to fill in the void that the Congress party's gradual decline was likely to create.

The authors see hope in Advani doing that. They hail his statesmanship in extending support to the V.P. Singh government who had won the election on an anti-corruption plank. They attribute the rise from two seats in 1984 to 88 in the 1989 Lok Sabha elections to Advani's superior leadership. Atal Behari Vajpayee, as president of the BJP, even flirted with Gandhian socialism despite the opposition of the RSS and other BJP leaders. The dilution of Hindutva under Vajpayee was arrested when Advani succeeded him in 1986.

In short, there is seemingly nothing wrong with Advani – from the rath yatra to demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya While the authors denounce Vajpayee as someone 'without an ideology' on the basis of Vajpayee-baiter Subramaniam Swamy's statement, they selectively quote noted writer Khushwant Singh to praise Advani. 'Really one of the most able, cool-headed, courteous and clean politicians left today. That breed of politicians has practically disappeared from the country I am pretty certain that he will never be unfair to Muslims if he becomes Prime Minister'. That Khushwant Singh, specially in the wake of Advani's rath yatra, had later criticised the BJP leader, retracting his earlier view is a fact the authors choose to ignore. For them the rath yatra and the subsequent demolition of the mosque in Ayodhya in December 1992 was the BJP's success in pitting Ram against Babur.

The authors see no flaw in the BJP. People like Vajpayee and Murli Manohar Joshi could just be bad leaders in a good party, whereas others like Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and Arjun Singh are bad – in

fact good-for-nothing leaders. It seems they are partly responsible for the BJP's success, because of their indulgence in adopting a pro-minority stance and playing one community against the other.

Their concluding para – 'The BJP is likely to come under intense pressure from the Hindu revivalist and lumpen elements represented by such organisations as the VHP and Bajrang Dal' (although they have nowhere been criticised for their role in demolition of the mosque) 'do adopt a belligerent approach on social and religious issues. Excercise of control on the activities of these organisations is essential for (the) BJP's survival as a responsible political party', has no link with the preceding contents of the book. But for the conclusion, the book is at best a very sympathetic compilation of BJP and the sangh parivar handouts

Yubaraj Ghimire

NATION AND NARRATION edited by Homi K Bhabha. Routledge, London and New York, 1990.

THE other day I saw a Maruti whose rear windscreen slogan read 'Love India or leave India' Just who this was addressed to, which 'India' we were supposed to cleave to or quit, and why this slogan was chosen at this critical juncture in the continual birth and re-birth of the nation are all questions which though not directly addressed by this book are certainly provoked by it

Since the publication of this book, nationalism has blossomed as an academic topic and given rise to a flood of books, seminars, conferences and special journal issues. The critical language used has much in common with theories of gender and sexuality· transgression, boundaries, origins and, perhaps above all, desire In a post-modern image-bombarded world of multimedia and the valorisation of 'choice', perhaps it is no surprise that there remains as some sort of core this desire to 'belong': to one's 'people' or one's 'land'. The contributors to this volume trace the collision (whether harmonious or violent) between that desire and the political, economic or military forces of the state which conspire to construct 'modern citizens'

The project of this collection is a doubled double 'to explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of nation', as Bhabha puts it in his introduction It is too easy to parody the self-reflexivity of this kind of critical language, the endless wordplays, of which Bhabha himself is the Grand Master However irritating, it is worth the effort, as the rewards in unravelling the sense, or rather senses, of Bhabha's prose are immense.

The book itself passes the acid test of edited collections· it is much more than the sum of its parts. There are fourteen other writers here, who cover a wide variety of cultural material, from Aboriginal Australia to Virginia Woolf, Gabriel Garcia Marquez to Sir Joshua Reynolds

For Sneja Gunew 'multiculturalism' is too easy a term, loaded with gender and power imbalance: it smacks of 'paternal confusion and maternal promiscuity'. Against that she advocates a strategy of 'deploying texts in such a way that they could not easily be recuperated in the name of nostalgia or absorbed into an Anglo-Celtic canon. . Tracing the 200 years of non-Anglo-Celtic writing has already begun'

This insistence on 'Third World' specifities is carried through in other essays, James Snead for example, points out the willingness on the part of Western critics and authors to insist upon the 'universality' of African writing whilst carrying on in ignorance of the differences between, say, Senegalese and Nigerian written and oral traditions, indeed 'Africa in all its dazzling racial, tribal and regional multiplicities'.

Martin Thom's essay on the germination – forgive the pun – of the modern French state out of repeated Germanic invasions, is both incisive and illuminating, especially for a reader like me, whose understanding of the French Revolution is gleaned more from *A Tale of Two Cities* than Ernest Renan Bruce Robbins covers the Dickens angle with his essay on *Bleak House* which though good, I felt never moved beyond the fairly obvious short-sightedness which is almost Dickens' *modus operandi*. It is likewise unfair, as David Simpson does with Walt Whitman, to criticise a writer for being unable to see beyond the prejudices and limitations of their own time and place. Simpson presents so much evidence that Whitman's vision is not quite as democratic and colour-blind as certain critics would want, that we are left wondering why, since those critics are clearly wrong, expend this much critical puff blowing down their straw houses?

As Rachel Bowlby points out, etymologically the words 'nation' and 'nature' derive from past participle of the Latin verb *nasci*, to be born. Embedded in both is a mythology of origins, reconstructed retrospectively, never clear, never remembered at the time. Her exceptional essay on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shines with insights not only about the birth of America – or, more accurately, the idea of America – but also about the ideologically loaded notion of motherhood Harriet Beecher Stowe's sentimental block-buster might seem like a strange place to find resonances of Gandhian rhetoric, but I found myself reminded again and again of his conflation of motherhood (characterising himself as 'the mother of the nation') and the birth of the independent Indian nation state. Although in some ways it is a shame that none of the essays deal directly with Indian national politics and writing, though Bhabha's concluding essay does tackle Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the theoretical richness of the collection leads the reader to draw his or her own parallels or divergencies.

Nation and Narration has become a classic in its own right and if you have nothing else, make sure you pack this volume in your knapsack if you are setting off into the

treacherous territories of 'The Nation', whatever guise that illusive and frustrating concept might take

Anita Roy

CASTE, NATIONALISM AND COMMUNISM IN SOUTH INDIA: Malabar 1900-1948 by Dilip M. Menon Cambridge University Press, 1994.

DILIP MENON'S attempt to write a social history of communism in Malabar, going beyond mechanical political economic correlations and the chronicling of events, is a refreshing addition to the rather trite list of history books on this most interesting and paradoxical district tucked away in the extreme south-west of India

The book's core arguments are worked out in the Introduction, where Menon presents his basic thesis simply and elegantly. The success and failure of various social political movements based on caste, nationalism and communism are seen in terms of their ability to construct and engage with notions of community. Inequality and difference both spurred the desire for community and these very factors hindered its eventual realization. Critical of the existing academic constructions and rendering of community, Menon posits a variant For him 'the idea of community represents an aspiration and not an achieved entity, it is always in the process of formation without reaching realization'(p 4). He then looks at caste, nationalism and communism in Malabar as 'several negotiations of community, all of which tried to mediate between differences in rural society of caste and access to agricultural resources' (p. 4) To elaborate this neat formulation, the rest of the narrative examines a set of interrelated themes: the community of subsistence, the community of worship; attempts to resolve the disparities present in these by movements based on caste, nationalism and socialism

Chapter I examines the agrarian economy and households between 1900 and 1930 to reconstruct the 'community of subsistence'. Though the book deals with the whole of Malabar district, this crucial first chapter for some reason is limited to studying the agrarian economy of north Malabar

Large land-holding Nayar families or *tharavadus*, are said to have been instrumental in the expansion of cultivation into the interior The dependence of the cultivators on the tharavadus for rice provided 'a sense of rural community, fraught with tension' (p 9) The authority of the *tharavadus*, it is claimed 'was based not only on cultural constructs, but was born of the sense of an occupational community consisting of landowners and cultivators' (p 21). An assertion, based on the evidence of a single autobiography – clearly a case of illicit generalization. Disagreeing with works depicting the Malabar economy as stricken by chronic stagnation and landlord exploitation, Menon posits an alternative scenario peopled by small cultivators who participated willingly for profit in a commercialized agriculture stimulated by foreign demand. Expanding cultivation, aided by subsidized and extended improving tenures are said to have guaranteed cultivators security of tenure The subsequent discussion of overleases or *melcharths* contradicts Menon's earlier claims of land security during this period of expansion. The Tenants' Improvement Act of 1900 helped the tenants greatly in north Malabar. Malabar tenants are correctly seen as responsive to the market

This chapter's major strength is its bold revision of the earlier thesis that Malabar suffered from chronic economic decline if not stagnation. Aggregate indicators such as agricultural productivity and inequality, however, exhibit a secular decline and increasing distortion during this period. Menon does not address this problem However, the attempt to impose the moral economy argument to analyse tharavadu-tenant relations and the assertion of a community of subsistence rest most precariously on extremely insufficient evidence The community of subsistence finally gave way under the strain of the Depression.

The community of worship around local shrines between 1900 and 1910 is taken up next. This community was composed of dominant Nayar and Tiya households and other specialized servitor castes. While the worshippers, who included both tharavadus and the cultivators, shared an eclectic pantheon of gods, differences between them in terms of status and access to resources were clearly defined. Menon is careful not to make direct associations between ritual forms and actual social relations He emphasises 'the existence of options within any given "system" of belief, in which a host of identities are asserted and transformed over time' (p.42). Control of temples not only ensured influence but also access to grain stocks. A distinction is made between the restricted worship at temples and a multi-caste participation in shrine worship. 'Over a period of time the boundaries between beliefs and deities became blurred and in north Malabar a composite culture arose, shared by upper and lower castes' (p. 61).

Early in the 20th century, reformers of the caste system tried to move away from shrine to temple worship to bring about equality in worship. The discussion of the community of worship with its ambivalence is both rigorous and carefully nuanced. The reader is, however, left to guess the significance of the periodization of this chapter. Further, most of the evidence is from Kottayam. Even if we agree with Menon's delimiting of north Kerala to the three northern taluks, can Kottayam be taken as representative of the whole of north Malabar?

The third chapter looks at the various means by which the Tiya community tried to distance itself from the status ascribed to it by dominant Hindu groups and establish an independent identity. The author is critical of characterizations of caste-based movements merely as political lobbies While the Tiyas were trying to focus on urban temples rather than popular shrines to assert their independence, the Con-

gress was involved in beating down caste differences that were seen as obstacles in the path of creating a unified Hindu identity. The next two chapters examine the working of the Congress in Malabar and its varied attempts to engage with the issue of resolving inequality. The Congress lacked a strong organizational structure in Malabar and civil disobedience in Malabar had moved along the local fault lines of power, resolving itself, in large part, into the activities of the younger members of dominant tharavadus. Temple entry failed to resolve caste inequality.

The next phase of politics between 1934 and 1940 sees the Congress in Kerala working with the assumption that the removal of economic inequality would obliterate caste. Peasant unions stopped appealing to earlier communities of caste, religion and nation and 'managed to undermine erstwhile structures of authority in a manner beyond the vision of Gandhian reformers' (p. 157). The Kerala Communist Party was formed and agitation in the face of landlord-police retaliation took a more aggressive turn. Menon is critical of earlier characterizations of peasant movements in this period as 'militant anti-imperialist and anti-feudal agitations'. He argues against constructions of the allegiances of 'middle' and 'poor' peasants on the specific ground that a single person could be landlord, tenant and cultivator in different contexts. The author clearly confuses analytical and juridical definitions of agrarian groups here.

The last chapter traces the growth of the Communists in a context of increasing wartime economic pressures, changes in party line, state repression and ultimately their negotiation with the state through parliamentary means, reconstituting the tradition of community.

Menon's style and craftsmanship are impeccable. The sources used are varied and exhaustive. The community of subsistence, however, seems to be more a construction of the author inspired by ideas of moral economy than suggested by evidence. The book deals only with north Malabar, conditions in north Malabar cannot be generalized for the whole of Malabar, its claimed ambit of study. Except for a missing footnote in the last chapter, the book is well edited. On the whole, an excellent contribution to modern Indian history.

R. Gopinath

THE NATION, THE STATE, INDIAN IDENTITY

edited by Madhushree Dutta, Flavia Agnes and Neera Adarkar. Samya, Calcutta, 1996.

W R INGE the Dean of St Paul from 1860 to 1954 had written that, 'A nation is a society united by a delusion about its ancestry and by a common hatred of its neighbours.' We have but to add the concept of minorities of neighbours, to get a perfect picture of how the Indian nation has been constructed and reconstructed through our long and tortuous history.

During the freedom movement, the Indian nation had been conceptualized in opposition to the colonial power. In the present times marked by the domination of Hindutva, we see the conceptualization of the Indian nation in opposition to the Muslim minority.

The book is a report of a seminar on this issue. Gyan Pandey concentrates once again on the suppressed narratives of the Partition in 1947, and the need to reconsider the event by reading it against dominant explanations. Pandey places his argument in the debates in historiography; but as a political theorist, I was more interested in the way he shows how the nascent nation state of India proceeds to monopolize not just resources, but the lives and the fates of its people, drastically curtailing their choices.

Ratnabali Chatterjee concentrates on the politics of history writing. Using the myth of Rani Padmini, she demonstrates how in history, according to the Hindutva brigade, myths and fictional accounts slide into historical narratives. These narratives have been countered both by archaeological evidence and interpretations by reputed historians, yet they serve to construct the binary opposition between heroic Hindu resistance and predatory Muslim armies. VHP propaganda uses these distorted facts to whip up demoniac passions. Two important questions reveal the weakness of this argument. Firstly, the opposition between myth and history which the paper works on needs to be rethought. Secondly, it is clear that all of us are responding to the agenda set by the Hindutva brigade. Power, after all, lies in the construction of agendas: not in the shifts within the agenda.

Jasodhara Bagchi argues that reason and universality have two faces. They oppress, but they also open doors for resistance. However, the current assault on Enlightenment philosophies has resulted in a rediscovery of uncritical indigenism, whether in the sophistic academic vocabularies of post-modernism or in the celebration of Hindutva. Bagchi tries to locate a secularism which is both indigenous and rational in the works of Tagore, particularly *Gora*. Tagore was to find this secularism in Lalan Fakir – a Baul who followed the Sufi tradition.

I have admired the work of Flavia Agnes. She has powerfully debunked the myth so fondly held by the Hindutva brigade, that the laws governing the marriage and divorce of Hindu women are progressive as compared to the Muslim personal code. Here, she outlines three alternatives to the controversial proposal for a UCC.

Communalism and riots over regional issues have posed many questions for feminism. The earlier notion of women's solidarity has had to be rethought given the active participation of women in these riots. Gouri Chowdhry, Shakun and Kalpana Kannabiran give us an insight into these complex issues by focusing on case studies in Delhi, Karnataka and Hyderabad.

Shifting the debate from gender to regional movements, Nandita Haksar and Gautam Navlakha focus on the North East and on Kashmir. The greatest challenge to the

dominant conceptualization of the Indian nation has come from these two regions And they have had to pay a heavy price for this. That the people of India continue to define these two regions as problem areas requiring the sustained presence of the army, is an indication of the myths that have been built around these issues by the media and official representation. We need more of such work to grasp the immense complexities of the nation-building process

The final contribution to this volume is a welcome study of the impact of communalism on the trade union movement This is a little explored area, and Vivek Monteiro and Meena Menon have performed a valuable task in focusing on it. They question the assumption that trade unions are secular or that they are bound by ideology

This is a volume which reflects the mood of the time, and the dominant academic and political debates that have arisen today. But I wonder if this alone, however valuable it may be, is enough. Surely more needs to be done in terms of conceptualising concrete political arrangements which fit the requirements of our multicultural society. One possible beginning may be to think of democracy in ways other than the rule of the majority Another would be to work out the implications of equality which would lead to the privileging of minority rights.

Neera Chandhoke

THE ILLEGITIMACY OF NATIONALISM: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of the Self

by Ashis Nandy. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994

FOR the majority of westernised Indians who participated in the Freedom struggle the aim was, no doubt, to usher in the emergence of a strong and independent India based on the model of Western nation-states. There was, however, a small minority whose commitment to anti-imperialism did not prevent them from having strong reservations about nationalism They felt that nationalism, particularly in its most radical form, was not only yet another idea taken from the West but also one which threatened the fabric of Indian culture and civilisation Gandhi was, of course, the most famous among them

Ashis Nandy, however, has chosen to devote his attention to Rabindranath Tagore whose opinions on this question have somehow been eclipsed by his literary and cultural fame. In doing so in the *Illegitimacy of Nationalism*, Nandy highlights the political thinking of one of the most formidable literary figures of the time and recovers a forgotten episode in the history of political ideas. He also makes it clear from the start that he intends to show why the debate on the 'illegitimacy of nationalism' has not only a legitimacy of its own but is also one of the most precious legacies of the Freedom movement

'Just who do you think you are?' asks a burly American of Peter Sellers, that well-known orientalist; 'In India, we don't think who we are. We *know* who we are' is Sellers' smug reply. Indira Gandhi appreciated this response so much that she was to repeat it later in an interview. Ashis Nandy would hardly share her feelings – at least where westernised Indian men are concerned. According to him, the latter do not share Sellers' blissful certitude about their identity In fact, if Nandy is to be believed, the majority appear either to have lost their 'self' or 'suppressed' the better part of it. Only the happy few seem to have somehow managed to recover it creatively. And Nandy is well-known for the unique and inventive manner in which he has highlighted and analysed all sorts of cultural dilemmas and inner psychological tensions faced by westernised Indians from the 19th century to the present day.

There is, of course, one danger in such a psychological approach which Nandy cannot altogether escape: the temptation to reduce the complexities of historical situations, eventful lives and masterful works of art to somewhat predictable patterns of explanation, derived from the heavy armoury of psychological concepts. But fortunately, one finds much more in his essay to enjoy.

The book is divided in three parts. In the first section, Nandy explores Rabindranath Tagore's opinions by analysing a collection of his essays on nationalism. Here, one finds Tagore's explicit reservations about the Western conception of the nation-state and his questioning of the desirability of India following this model. The second section is based on the reading of three Tagore novels which Nandy has selected for their political implications: *Gora* (The White Man), *Ghare Baire* (The Home and the World) and *Char Adhyay* (Four Chapters). In his interpretation, Nandy attempts to recover the ethical and political assumptions which have informed those works. He shows, in particular, the author's growing preoccupation with all forms of political activism which lead to the dehumanisation of the other and the alienation of the self

Viewed from this perspective, all three novels can, according to Nandy, be read as literary parables on the inescapable failure of politics which deny the moral integrity of the self, even if in the interest of a just cause. He also contrasts the characters of Tagore's novels with the lives and predicaments of those featuring in the works of other contemporary authors such as *Pather Dabhi* by Saratchandra Chattopadhyay or *Kim* by Rudyard Kipling. Perhaps, he might equally have considered *My brother's face* (1924) by Dhan Gopal Mukherji, the central character of which seems to me particularly close to Tagore's ideal of political consciousness. In the last section of his book, Nandy completes his interpretation by linking Tagore's political ideas not only to the life of the author but also, to that of another of his contemporaries, Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, whom Nandy identifies as Rabindranath 'political double'

It is this progressive shift in focus, from Tagore to Brahmabandhab which constitutes, to my mind, the most original part of this essay. Far from distracting the reader's attention from Tagore, it offers, on the contrary, some of the most interesting clues for understanding his political views. According to Nandy, not only did Brahmabandhab act as a model for some of the politically motivated characters in his novels, but the novels themselves seem to have been written as direct reactions to the new style of violent militantism and narrow nationalism that Tagore came increasingly to identify with Brahmabandhab's personal evolution

It is in this context, partly encouraged by the emergence of Gandhi on the political scene, that Tagore attempted to formulate both a critical appraisal of political violence and a plea for the necessity of a moral alternative. Moreover, by using Brahmabandhab as a point of reference in his reading of the diverse characters of Tagore's novels and then by focusing progressively on his life history, Ashis Nandy finds an original approach to his subject. His interpretation is not restricted mainly to the realm of textual analysis or the details of personal biography but neither is it diluted into general considerations about the intellectual and political climate of the time.

Nandy remains a psychologist, a fact which may account for his finding of a 'primeval scene' given the chance. However, this 'scene' is not directly linked with some form of the Oedipus complex and it has not been suppressed by the mechanisms of the unconscious mind. One may add also that Nandy does not discover it in the details of Tagore's childhood but, more unexpectedly, in the controversial preface of the original edition of *Char Adhyay* (1934) – a preface that the author decided to remove from the later editions of his book, owing to vehement protests of Bengali fellows In this short preamble, Tagore describes his last encounter with Brahmabandhab in which the latter is said to have confessed that he had 'fallen very low'

Nandy has often exercised his talents of interpretation, not only for deciphering the complexities of individual and familial lives, but for identifying the destructive as well as the creative dimensions of unexpected encounters. After reading this book, one has no doubt that the encounter between Brahmabandhab and Rabindranath did indeed deserve such attention

In his introductory sentence, Ashis Nandy recalls his 'interest in the psychological biography of the modern nation State in India' Few of us can boast of a clear understanding of what the 'biography' of a state is meant to be, let alone its 'psychology'. But since no one hesitates to evaluate the 'liberal' or the 'authoritarian' 'character' of a state, this becomes another reason to show interest in Nandy's approach

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Declaration

The following Declaration of the workshop on family laws and human rights of women, organised by the AGHS Legal Aid Cell, Lahore, was received in response to our issue on the uniform civil code (A Question of Rights, Seminar 441, May 1996)

Preamble

Recalling that the constitutions of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan guarantee all citizens equality before the law. Noting that such equality is denied to women and children in the sphere of family laws and which is of crucial significance to them and realising that family laws of religious minorities have remained even more stagnant and often bear the risk of being influenced by the norms of the religious majority, the participants of the two-day workshop on Family Laws and Human Rights of Women in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan call upon concerned persons, social action groups, political parties, legislators the governments of these countries to campaign for and initiate reforms in family laws in order to make them just and guarantee equal rights to all women and children.

The minimum requirements for such standards are:

1. *Marriage, Separation and Divorce*
   * Both women and men shall be entitled to a free choice in marriage.
   * Women and men shall have equal rights in all matters relating to marriage, divorce, guardianship, maintenance and custody of children.
   * Marriages and divorces shall be properly registered and easy access to records be provided
   * Child marriage shall be abolished. The minimum age of marriage for both women and men shall be eighteen years.
   * All polygamous marriages be banned and made punishable. Such marriages shall be null and void and the injured party be adequately compensated.
   * Provisions pertaining to restitution of conjugal rights shall be deleted.
   * A civil law shall be enacted to provide for inter-faith marriages and their registration.
   * Women and men shall have equal right under citizenship laws and domicile regulations.
   * Spouses shall be entitled to judicial separation by mutual consent and by contest.
   * Distribution of moveable and immovable assets and income upon divorce or dissolution of marriage shall be based on principles of justice and equity.
   * Matrimonial courts shall be established to deal exclusively with all disputes under family laws (including inheritance and return of personal belongings to the spouses). These courts shall have jurisdiction in respect of family matters of all religious communities. Court fees should be minimal.
   * The matrimonial courts shall have adequate representation of judges from religious minorities and women.
   * Execution of decrees passed by the matrimonial courts shall be made more effective and efficient.
   * Laws shall be enacted to allow for transfer of cases from one jurisdiction to another in family matters.
   * Women and men shall have statutory right of free access to information about their rights through all avenues, including legal aid, the media and through curriculum in formal and informal educational centres.

2. *Guardianship, Custody, Adoption and Other Rights of the Child*
   * All children born in wedlock or out of it shall enjoy equal status and equal rights.

* The law must recognise both parents as the natural guardians of the child.
* In case of separation amongst spouses custody of minors should be awarded upon sole consideration of the welfare of the minor.
* In passing orders relating to custody, the court shall also pass appropriate orders for the minor's maintenance and management of his/her property.
* Every adult person shall have the right to adopt children.
* All questions of custody and maintenance of the property and adoption of the minor shall be decided by the Matrimonial Courts.
* All matters of adoption shall be dealt by Matrimonial Courts.
* Children must never be described as 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' by the law.
* Denial of parentage, if found to be untrue, should be made punishable.

3. *Economic Rights of Women Within Marriage*
* The economic rights of women on marriage, during the subsistence of marriage and on dissolution of marriage shall be protected by law.
* All endowments pledged to a woman at the time of her marriage, whether by parents, parents-in-law or her husband, and gifts given to her shall be her absolute and separate property.
* Adequate maintenance, including interim maintenance, shall be provided to the dependent spouse during the subsistence of the marriage.
* During the subsistence of the marriage the wife's access to matrimonial assets must be guaranteed including her right to reside in the matrimonial home.
* Laws against domestic violence shall empower the courts to grant injunction restraining a violent spouse from entering the matrimonial home.
* In case of dissolution of a marriage the courts shall decide all related matters – e.g. divorce/dissolution, maintenance/alimony or dower/financial settlement and provision of shelter simultaneously except disputes relating to custody of minors. In doing so, separate procedures be laid down in order to provide for expeditious disposal of suits.
* Assets, movable or immovable, accumulated during the subsistence of the marriage shall be distributed equally on the termination of the marriage.
* Inheritance laws shall be changed to ensure that the share of the male and female heirs of same class of kinship shall be equal. Upon the death of the husband, the widow and her children shall inherit in equal proportion half of the immovable and moveable assets accumulated by the couple during the subsistence of the marriage. The widow shall remain the sole owner of the balance half of such assets till her death.
* Children should also inherit the share of property of their pre-deceased parents at the death of the grandparents.

Spouses should also inherit from the share of their pre-deceased spouse on the death of a parent-in-law.*

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* The following comments by Vasudha Dhagamwar were sent to Asma Jahangir after receiving the draft.

The way the para beginning 'Inheritance laws shall be changed ... death' is drafted, there is no possibility of making a will of any part of the property. We had agree upon 1/2 the property being given to heirs in predetermined shares and 1/2 being subject to will There can be good reasons for giving more to one person than another. Secondly, it will permit bequests to charities.

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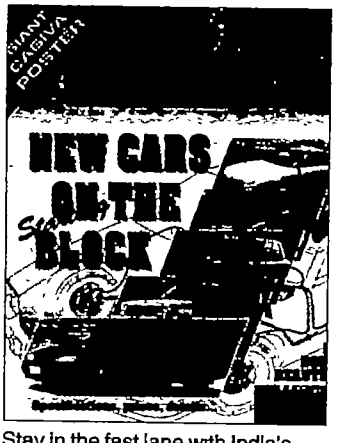

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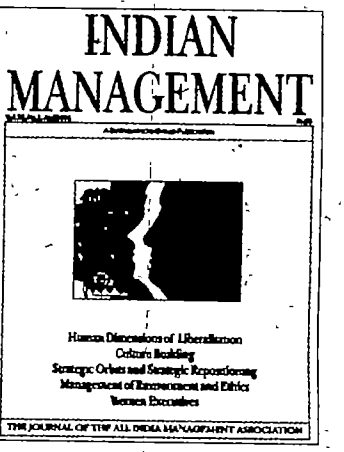

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Comment:

On dalit consciousness

THE word 'dalit' has come to occupy a nodal position in the debates centring around power and protest. Although many studies have recently been undertaken on the subject by social scientists, most of them deal with the movement *per se* neglecting the aspect of consciousness, its propelling force [1]

Even when scholarship has examined this aspect, it has either been attenuated in coverage and analysis or romanticised into empty glorification.[2] Such romanticism emanates from western academic work on their own deprived communities and has been juxtaposed on studies of western and southern India. Studies influenced by the western model projected dalit consciousness as over-developed whereas, in fact, it was under-developed.[3] They also suffered from another limitation the image of the dalit which was mainly imaginative was subsequently tailored to resemble the image of a panther, becoming a popular model for the dalit. This was a travesty of the true image and a technique was thus invented to find similarities between the two, overlooking the differences.

In the context of north India, the image of the dalit is primarily a political one, unable to develop a cultural face of its own. Although this concept was thrust into the arena of intellectual debate, the paradox persisted. The earlier image of the dalit was contemptuously thrown aside and the newly erected image developed. This left little scope for dialogue between the past and the present, imposing as it did the latter on the former. It was a model devoid of any communicative network encapsulating both. When the question of identity arose among this class – a question which Milan Kundera justified in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* as the conflict of man in search of his name – a name and a definition was lent to them. Gradually, they became enslaved in these conceptual categories, defining and naming themselves from a borrowed standpoint.[4] This was not the indigenously discovered sect image but one which, in fact, borrowed consciously or unconsciously from others.

Thus, writings in contemporary sociology use the word dalit in a parochial sense. They establish the dalit as saturated with consciousness and involved in a protracted struggle against the developed castes. It is an imagined community supposedly sensitized and conscious of its history, and in perpetual conflict with the upper castes

*I am grateful to Dr A R Mishra, Avijit Pathak, Pradeep Kumar, Saraswati Haidar, G P Deshpande, Nandu Ram, Prof G.C Pande, Prof. S P Nagendra, Amit Sen Gupta, Prof Rajeshwar Prasad for critical discussions

1. In the dalit's study the issue of consciousness is untouched

2 M Moffatt, in *An untouchable community in South India a structure and consensus*, Princeton University Press, minimised the lower class consciousness; subaltern historians romanticised it

3 Eleanor Zelliot, *From untouchable to dalit essays on the Ambedkar movement* Manohar, Delhi

4 S.C. Dube, *Parampara, itihas bodh aur sanskriti* Radha Krishna Publications, New Delhi

This raises some questions. First, is the northern Indian belt the right terrain for this confrontation? Second, are southern and western India true to the image depicted by these writings? Third, can such conceptual categories be used for the study of all minorities and deprived communities? Holism based on totality cannot be conceptualised through exclusive reductionism. Fourth, is the word 'dalit' becoming a dogma? And lastly, is it not a mere political truth different from the wider social truth which has greater universality? Particularism and universalism are, after all, polar opposites

Thus, on account of its conceptual limitations, the term dalit is debated both among theorists and its cadres Some find it incapable of encompassing the totality and some, like the neo-Buddhists and Marxists, have demanded an extension of its meaning, others agitate for its replacement This has created a world-view of fragmentation and fission rather than the intended one of unification Thus, on the conceptual plane, 'dalit' faces a perilous resistance, contradictions being inherent in the origin of the word itself In this essay, I present some dimensions of dalit consciousness as it emerged in the '60s and after.

In the post-1960 period, dalit consciousness represented itself in a new form in western India The formation of this consciousness of resistance derived from the Bhakti movement and the renaissance led by Ambedkar But to claim that just these elements were formative influences on dalit consciousness is an over-simplification which eclipses the complexity, depth and the multiple forms that it underwent The influence of the critical theory of Herbert Marcuse is explicitly visible in the post-1960s formation and emergence of dalit consciousness in Maharashtra. In 1967, Marcuse's *The Age of Revolution* advanced a model of Black protest in the U S . based on the concept of Whites versus Blacks This paradigm was further popularised by Fanon and Debray and led to many protest movements full of nihilist logic and terrorist overtones These protests, which glorified the anarchist way and counterpoised historical adversaries against each other, found an echo in India as well. Dalit leaders and writers transplanted this on to the Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra A philosophy of negation can never lead to greater social revolutions nor become the genesis for movements of transformation Understanding the limitations of such a philosophy, Wittgenstein in 'On Certainty' says that if a modicum of symphony is not established, it results in mutual recrimination. D. R. Nagaraj in *The Flaming Feet* says: 'This is what has happened precisely in understanding the philosophical views of Gandhi and Ambedkar' .[5]

The implementation of the Marcusean model in Maharashtra depicted both a victory and a defeat for dalit consciousness.[6] 'Another phenomenon which contributed to the events in Maharashtra was the break between the past and the present generation. It created an indifference towards the past which can be seen in the form of re-colonial alienation.[7] Secondly, it consolidated besides creating a consciousness of dalit *versus* (emphasis mine) non-dalit. The Marxist influence started shifting along these new lines although the past could not be subdued completely. Dalit intellectuals searched for truths discovered in protest movements in America in the Indian context and accepted it as a means towards the fulfilment of their needs and desires.[8]

Many positive aspects of the society of western India emanated from this model of protest It underlined, rather demarcated, a separate identity for the depressed class Further, it provided a platform for the expression of their desires. But while it gave them a voice, it also gave rise to many negative dimensions, for the identity which emerged was a borrowed one from American society. It was not representative of the true consciousness of the Indian depressed caste. Moreover, it was a negative voice which did not develop a mechanism of dialogue but a paradigm of abuses which did not provide a path for positive political, cultural and economic movements. Consequently, only a few neo-Buddhists and some alienated people remained attached to it The others affiliated themselves with the ideology of the left.[9]

We perceive dalit consciousness as a movement in which memories have a significant role to play. Power, force and hegemonic ideologies erase the original memories and replace them with those conducive to their display.[10] Hegemonic power here includes the intellectuals and elites of that section who also put on the garb of insiders but were recruited and socialised by the western system of knowledge. Influenced by an alien ideology, they tailored it as a new truth (which, in fact, it is not) for their community.

Secondly, only memories which are politically convenient for the intellectual leadership of that community were selected. Thus, memories of the dalit community which are true to both should be evaluated and the nexus between the two discovered. It can be said

5 Some dalit intellectuals glorified Ambedkarism as a 'renaissance' for his community

6 The language of dalit discourse is abusive and negative; some theoreticians glorified it as a epistemological break

7 Ngugiwa Thyongo, *Bhasha, sanskriti aur rashtriya asmita*. Saransh, Delhi

8 See. Lata Murugkar, Dalit Panther movement in Maharashtra, sociological appraisal Bombay, 1995, p 225

9 Narayan Surve accepted a leftist path in the latter period

10 See. Milan Kundera, *The book of laughter and forgetting* Rupa, India

that a consciousness which derives from the past is imagined and conspirational The conflict of this class with the present is full of confusion and chaos, as regards its future, it has few original imaginations towards the construction of a new society. For the liberation of any depressed community it is essential that political truth transform itself into cultural truth This has not always been possible in the context of the dalit movement If the dalit movement is a cultural movement, then it needs modifications in its encounter with other cultures. But this is what is least evident . The movement of dalit consciousness is one of deconstruction but much remains to be done in order to transform it into a movement of construction

This phenomenon is transparent in the debate between Hindu nationalism and dalit philosophy While dalit logic deconstructs the myth of a Hindu nationalism, it fails to discover or create its own alternative myth It lacks imaginative internalisation of the totality of the cultural process· that is, its genesis, development and proliferation in the given socio-historical context To cite examples from the two epics, it has been found that the value of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata has been negated with the counterposing of the incidents of Shambook and Eklavya respectively. The two books are condemned but the authors are glorified, because they are perceived as belonging to the dalit caste.

Is such a philosophy attractive to only a select and established group of dalits? And are not newly emerging issues (such as reservations) with their limited vision serving only urban groups and therefore elitist in design?

Thus, the articulation of dalit 'identity' raises many questions for social scientists and activist groups These are.

1. Can the paradigm of political movements in the West be superimposed on the Indian context in a uni-dimensional manner?
2 Can the philosophy of nihilism and confrontation succeed in a heterogenous, multi-polar and concentric society like India?
3. What should be done when an ideology for the depressed begins to stagnate?
4. What are the lessons of earlier movements, and why did they fail?

If the movement led by the Mahar community was successful, how did it become elitist and begin to discriminate against other depressed communities? Santamaya, a character in a novel by Saran Kumar Limbwale, declares: 'Mahars are criminal communities. They will cut into pieces your daughters and sisters. They will gang rape her '

Thus, it is evident that the battle-cry of equality by definition denies the existence of any conflict in dalit ideology This was also the case with many parties dubbed as Brahminical. The truth is that due to its alien origin and the lack of an adequate awareness of the social, political and cultural panorama of the country, this ideology has failed to develop a model of true protest.

BADRI NARAYAN TIWARI

Two mango trees

A TALK on 'What should we do to improve research and education in universities' was going on in the faculty hall. The speaker spoke at some length with evangelical overtones, '...therefore, there is little to be expected of the universities unless we build new laboratories and build interdisciplinary schools. New areas require new people So we should consciously expand the universities towards newer areas. We should take care of recruitment such that promising young talent is selected ...'

My mind wandered back to a visit to Duke University that I cannot forget. For my companion Carl, having graduated from there, it was visit down memory lane He was saying, 'You know, we are very happy to be here in this area In the US, we call it the Research Triangle, which includes Raleigh. A lot of research activity is concentrated here.' I said, 'Yes, I know. Some very good work in biophysics has come from Duke.' We drove inside the campus and stopped in front of the lawn facing the chapel, a sturdy piece of architecture. I remembered it from the pictures I used see as a kid from my father's album. He was 'postdocing' there, while Carl was doing his Ph.D We went by the chapel, climbed a bit and got into a road which curved sharply. Carl exclaimed, 'This is the Physics department, and you see, we cross here and this was where a car hit your father and he was hospitalised . .' As far as I could tell, there was not a brick that was less than 50-60 years old. We walked further Every building in the vicinity was of equally old vintage. The only new addition seemed to be a community centre for amenities.

How many new buildings and departments have started since then, I asked Carl was apologetic. 'I don't know Yes, a new management centre was started. I think that is about it. I hardly know any faculty now. So many faces have changed in the last few decades.' We had a bite at the cafeteria and walked down towards the car. Parents were driving their wards in to settle them in the dorms . boys and girls in tennis shoes and shorts with a very heterogenous collection of bags and baggage. 'This is where we roomed. I would go to the chapel on Sunday mornings and your father would go to

the lab or library We would meet for lunch after that,' he was reminiscing

A little later we drove back to Winston 'Do your universities expand a lot? You appeared surprised to know that Duke has not grown physically.' I said, 'Yes, since my graduation, I have seen a lot of growth in many Indian universities ' Carl continued apologetically, 'I am afraid, Duke is a bit conservative. It must feel good to be part of a lot of growth ' I kept quiet I was not so sure. A week later, a nostalgic visit to Yale after a lapse of some 20 years reinforced the same thoughts.

I recalled an earlier episode in Munich in the early '80s I was discussing a theoretical paper I had written with M, a senior professor and a good friend. We had just finished touring the two floors that housed NMR and other spectroscopy and we were going down to their molecular biology facility He was very appreciative of my paper. 'Good heavens, what a lovely typescript! Did you get it done on an electronic typewriter or what?' I nodded and said, 'Surely, you must have dozens of them ' M looked sad 'I am afraid not We use dot matrix printers for all our manuscripts This is too expensive ' I quickly hid the other manuscript typed on a similar typewriter

A change in the speaker's tone brought me back from my reverie ' . In any event,' he was now saying, 'education is an article of faith for the modern man. These temples of learning cannot be dowdy. Teachers must be well paid and students well looked after It is difficult to have faith when the stomach is empty It is equally difficult to expect education and research without strong financial support. Give universities the money that national laboratories have taken away from them and they will automatically restore themselves to their former glory,' he thundered

Faith and education? My mind drifted to a visit to Benares where I had gone to deliver a lecture My talk was over on the very first day and I decided to visit the temple the town is famous for. The evening was cold and it began to lightly drizzle Others who had promised to go with me to the temple backed out Shuklaji was very solicitous 'What Doctorsa'ab! You are going alone to visit the Lord in the Viswanath temple?' 'We all have to go alone finally to visit the Lord, Shuklaji,' I quipped He chuckled appreciatively and sent a student to escort me We tried a series of vehicles only to finally reach the temple by foot

Everywhere, it seemed, roamed the famous Benares cows, which I had heard prefer paper to greenery Obviously, they digested all the news that is fit to eat! We went through the shopping area to the temple, which swarmed with security men We entered from the side of the Masjid, whose back wall was distinctly non-Islamic The student told me that there is a dispute whether it was part of the original temple. I saw the well from which the Shivling was recovered. Then we walked into the temple. There was so little of it! The room was small, heavily decorated in silver. A corner had a hole in which the Shivling was placed below the floor level. I was two feet away from the Shivling, which was being circumambulated by devotees. I asked if there was any *prasad* to be purchased to take home. The priest smiled and said, 'Here you offer yourself and not prasad ' *Touche* He gave me a flower instead.

We stepped out to look at the shops. The student asked, 'Do you like the temple? It is very small, nothing like the temples you see in South.' I replied that it was true I remembered my grandfather often remarking that all Hindus must visit Benares In the past, you often undertook the pilgrimage to Benares aware that you may never return There appeared to be a finality with regard to a visit to Benares built into the Hindu psyche Like the Jews speak of Hear, O Jerusalem!

The lack of a temple appeared to have changed nothing We went on to the Hanuman Ghat. By now it was dark and drizzling. Very few people were at the ghat. The dark night made all the dirt and filth invisible and I saw only the meandering contours of the Ganges glinting though the ghats The sight was majestic. Being a non-believer, I could not claim any deeper sentiments. All I could understand was that a magnificent temple stood next to the majestic river from times immemorial as a basis for building faith in people. The river (when you could see it) was filthy and the temple was non-descript and small Yet nothing seemed to have made a difference to the faith. How come?

The speaker was fervent: 'When we see that the national reconstruction is abysmally low, when we see that we are not in a position to compete with theWest despite 50 years of independence, when we see only increasing dependence, we see all is not well with us. We will see the greater influence of multinationals and we will see greater economic and intellectual slavery in times ahead. Unless people are educated, they will not fight for betterment of their lot Unless universities improve, education will not improve. The UGC is far too small to improve the lot of the universities. Finances are the key. We need political will to change national priorities Poverty, communicable diseases – all these can be erased with education and application of science .' he went on.

I slipped into a semi-conscious state. A recent visit to my home town after nearly 20 years came to mind Unsure of where to stay since no one was expecting me, I booked myself into a hotel That was as well. Two minutes after I entered, the lights went off and the genset took over I slept for a while, got dressed and went to the better part of the town, once known for its cleanliness and well-planned roads. This was where we had our ancestral home. The place was teeming with

new building activity The roads were filthy, mosquitoes and flies buzzed everywhere Once the roads had natural lawns on the sides; now the sewage drains were stagnant with overflowing water making filthy pools all over The traffic was heavy even in this part of the town, which is far away from any highway or market. No one sat chatting on the roadside culverts any more, once a common sight

I walked past our old house, which had a large garden all around Nothing was left of it A beautiful house stood in its place, towards one side of the plot The old guava, mango and badam trees were all gone. So was the well in front I could only see two small ornamental Christmas trees near the driveway at the edge of the lawn There was a chowkidar near the main gate, which was now a sleek metal affair and not the rickety old wooden one I remembered from my childhood I looked again. Yes, there were still two mango trees that I could remember. One was a good Banganpalli that my sister and I had planted The other was an oddball that grew by itself and gave lots mangoes which were best eaten raw with salt The front of the house was now decorated by a large pool of sewage water Swarms of mosquitoes hovered and occasionally blocked the view. I hurried away from there

I walked further and saw more construction and even more pools of stagnant water I decided to drop in on an old friend who had retired as a professor of Social and Preventive Medicine in the local medical college. 'Yes, the place has deteriorated They removed the toilet sweepers without alternative arrangements The water table is so high that it is not possible to dig deep and maintain sewage drains We used to get our sewage carted away once. Now we live in it The difference is that a lot more of us are there to share and contribute to this filth There is a lot of money and there are a number of industrial activities Civic sense, alas, no,' he said ruefully 'This place has no dearth of educated and moneyed people. Why must we live in this filth?' The question was purely rhetorical and I let it pass

Next morning, I walked through a huge open compound in the middle of the city, still vacant, that housed the school where I studied. There was a conflict between the retired teachers and the Church. Those who occupied the quarters, now as dilapidated as the houses were, would not vacate them. There were court cases pending, with every conceivable stay ordered and order stayed. The Headmaster's residence, which also housed the office, had completely collapsed I walked into the main building to see my old classroom past a staircase that always smelt of bats There were not even benches The neighbouring rooms had a few, but they were mostly broken I asked for the Headmaster The peon told me that he stays far away since the house collapsed More than half the buildings had collapsed. 'I think that it is time the government takes over the whole area and converts it into a park,' opined the professor when I met him again I was not happy to hear that.

The government college opposite, where I did my junior college, seemed to be in better shape. The tennis courts and the trees were gone but new buildings had emerged instead The buildings housing the lecture rooms appeared to have been recently painted. 'The classes are held in shifts now,' I was told. I walked up to the science labs. These were in a bad condition.

I remembered my visit to the neighbouring university as a member of their board of studies a year earlier. The university department did not even have a proper colorimeter The equipment that was sanctioned to it, including an ultracentrifuge, was never commissioned. The students came to us in a *morcha.* They wanted some modern biology to be taught but the department had nothing to show or offer The Head proudly showed us a new two-room construction with a corridor where a genetic engineering lab was to be developed The place had an air-conditioner, temporarily out of order, one clinical centrifuge and one gel apparatus. There was a move to start a biotechnology teaching programme with these! I promised to send them our syllabus from Pune.

'In the final analysis, a country is what its educated people are,' the speaker went on. 'We have no dearth of young minds We should make things available to them. They are like sponges. They will absorb all that we have to offer. It is possible to mould them exactly into the kinds of people we want them to be. They are impressionable .' he continued

I woke up with a start. Was he kidding? I remembered the row I had with my son the previous night. 'Why don't you lay off?' he was arguing. 'If I don't play now, will I play at your age? I tell you, I don't want to read non-fiction I want only story books.' 'He is terrible,' said my daughter, raising her head out of the Brilliant Tutorials that she was cramming. 'He is a wastrel and never reads a word.' 'I don't want to be a bore like you always mugging from books,' retorted my son The fight went on

'We must think in simple terms which are tangible and do-able ' The speaker went on. 'The question of nation building has to have a starting point and that starting point is education We must understand the basics and the basics are always transparent. They tell us the essence of the scheme of things and woe upon us if we do not comprehend this scheme of things.'

I still do not understand why the two mango trees were spared They looked so out of place in that manicured lawn surrounded by stagnant cesspools.

V SITARAMAM

A woman of courage

A PLAQUE of Honour in Washington D.C, in the memory of Razia Bhatti, the outstanding Pakistani journalist who died on 12 March, reads: 'In memory of Razia Bhatti (1943-96), fearless Pakistani journalist whose life was dedicated to the pursuit and advocacy of press freedom, fundamental rights and the establishment of the principle of accountability in public life.'

These words represent the bare bones of the story of a remarkable life. Her real claim to fame was her ability to resist bullying from newspaper managements and governments. No one could desire a higher quality in a journalist, specially in these times of bullying governments and proprietors

I met Razia Bhatti on just three occasions, twice in Pakistan and a third time last year at the women's conference in Beijing But we had spoken to each other on the telephone and occasionally corresponded. Like several foreign journalists visiting Pakistan, a chat with Razia and a visit to the *Newsline* office, the monthly magazine she had founded and ably edited, was unavoidable. I had benefited from it tremendously and this was a contact I readily passed on to other Indian friends visiting Pakistan.

After a Master's degree in journalism which she topped, Razia began her career as an Assistant Editor with the *Illustrated Weekly of Pakistan*, part of the *Dawn* group. When the magazine was changed into a monthly and re-christened *Herald*, Razia took over as editor. For the first time people recognised the potential of this talented journalist as she transformed the magazine from a pretty, illustrated one reporting timidly about social events to a well-designed and hard-hitting newsmagazine, the type of publication the world of Pakistani journalism had not encountered before.

These were the years when General Zia ul-Haq's oppressive press laws were being vigorously implemented When most publications toed the official line, it took more than ordinary courage to be different. Yet Razia and her team – she had gathered some of the brightest and best young Pakistani journalists around her – decided that their magazine would not flinch if the occasion demanded a critical word about the powerful.

The axe was bound to fall on such daring. And it did. The proprietors of *Herald*, under pressure from the government, insisted that Razia tone down her criticism and carry some pro-Zia articles. She refused. Rather than bend to hold on to a safe and distinguished job, Razia resigned from the editorship of *Herald* in August 1988. And with her almost the entire editorial team of the magazine also put in their papers. No greater tribute could have been paid to the confidence that her colleagues had in her.

Razia's departure from *Herald* did not, of course, mean that the authorities in Pakistan had heard the last

from her Rather than quietly slipping into oblivion, Razia and her colleagues immediately began working on another monthly magazine, *Newsline*. With practically no funds, a cramped hotel room for an office and no big backing, they challenged all accepted wisdom in journalism by producing not just an excellent magazine, but one that had all the audacity and cheek that *Herald* lacked because it was part of the *Dawn* group's stable of newspapers and magazines.

Within six months of its launch in 1989, *Newsline* had already won the prestigious Asia Pacific award for best editorial content. It went on to win four All Pakistan Newspaper Society (APNS) awards for editorial excellence. Today, *Newsline* is acknowledged as the best Pakistani newsmagazine. And the credit goes to the tireless woman who conceived it and ran it until her premature death of a brain haemorrhage in March

Now that she is gone, one wonders what made this woman so remarkable and so brave. Razia did not fit any stereotype. Not at all the typical, pushy journalist one expects to meet, she was in fact quite shy. She was also an excellent listener – an exceptional quality for a journalist – and although she held strong opinions like any other journalist, was always open to suggestions.

My only professional encounter with her was when I requested her to write an article on women journalists in Pakistan for a media and development journal planned by The Panos Institute in London. Razia at first responded by saying that women journalists in Pakistan really did not face any problems and therefore there was not much to write about. I then suggested that she look beyond the experience of the English language press and speak to women in the Urdu and regional language newspapers. I told her how we, in India, had discovered that outside the exalted domain of the English language press, a whole host of problems from sexual harassment to policies against recruiting women journalists still operated in many regional language newspapers.

Razia accepted my suggestion and when I next spoke to her she was most excited. For suddenly she too had realised that a whole new and rather depressing world existed out there which needed to be investigated and exposed.

Another subject which instantly bonded us was the fact that I lived in Maharashtra, the state of her origin. Razia spoke Konkani and her family were from Ratnagiri. Her maiden name was Bondrey She had hoped she would be able to visit Ratnagiri this year and trace her roots. We had planned to travel together down the Konkan coast

When you meet a person like Razia Bhatti, a woman who did not talk about her achievements but instead was interested in the world around her, including the person in front of her, it is difficult to assess how well she was regarded as a journalist in Pakistan. While *Newsline* is clearly an exceptional publication, one was never too sure how Razia's professional excellence and integrity were evaluated by her peer group. Sadly, it is only after her passing that we learn of the vast respect that she had earned through her indomitable courage as an editor

Razia's passing was noted by all the leading newspapers in Pakistan. And the tributes they have paid editorially and in the obituary columns only confirm what one had sensed about this remarkable women. Practically all the tributes speak of Razia as being 'bold and independent minded', 'committed to speaking the truth and committed to the freedom of the press'. In *The News* on 14 March, fellow journalist Kaleem Omar writes, 'Razia believed journalists should hold no brief for any political party or special interest group, and that their sole concern as journalists should be the truth, no matter how awkward or politically unpopular that truth might be'

Her *Newsline* team (incidentally, the first magazine run by a journalists' cooperative in Pakistan's history) wrote in the special issue which carries tributes to her, 'Fear was just not part of her lexicon. Neither was money. Advertising revenue was often and willingly sacrificed at the altar of public interest.'

To be a journalist in Pakistan, even when there is no direct censorship, is not an easy task. Particularly if you have the frame of mind Razia had. She succeeded in walking the tightrope between the bullying of the government and the opposition and ended up falling foul of both In August last year, her home was raided in the early hours of the morning by the police and a criminal case was registered against her at the behest of the Governor of Sindh, Kalal Azfar, whose ire had been roused by an article in *Newsline* It was only when there was a united outcry from journalists across Pakistan, that the case was withdrawn. But the tension took its toll on Razia

Although very low key as a person – she claimed no special privileges as editor and sat amongst her staff in an open-plan office – Razia's remarkable leadership as an editor and a journalist received the recognition that it deserved In 1994, she was chosen by the US-based International Women's Media Foundation for the Courage in Journalism Award She had earlier received awards for outstanding achievement in her own country from the Association of Business, Professional and Agricultural Women, the Network of Enterprising Women and the Alumni Association of the Department of Mass Communication, Karachi University.

Razia is survived by her husband Gul Hamid Bhatti, sports editor of *The News* and two children, Kamil (15) and Sara (5).

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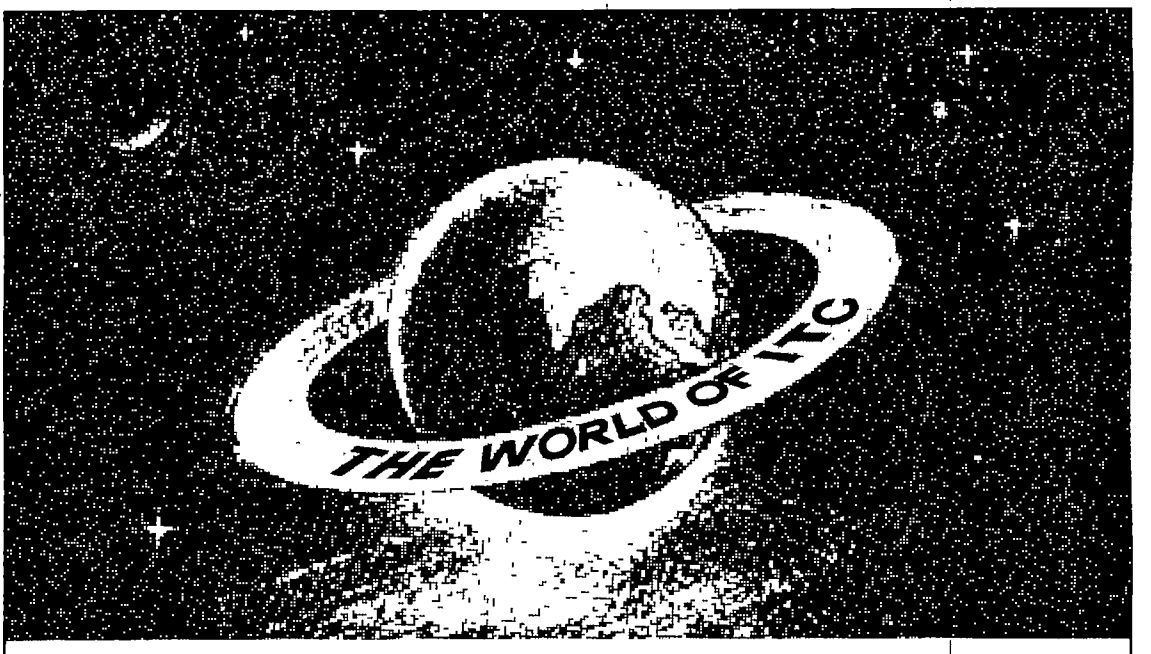

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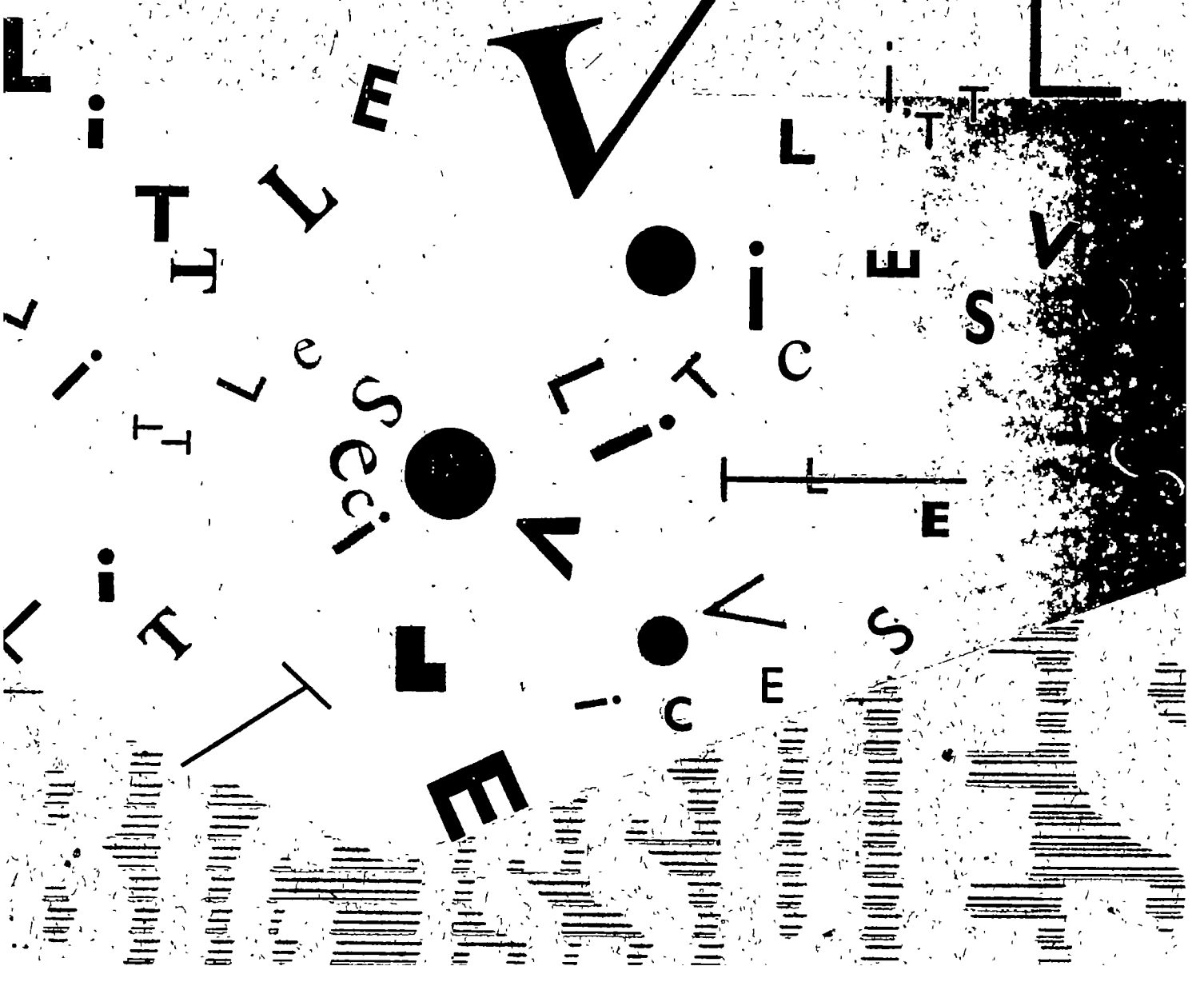

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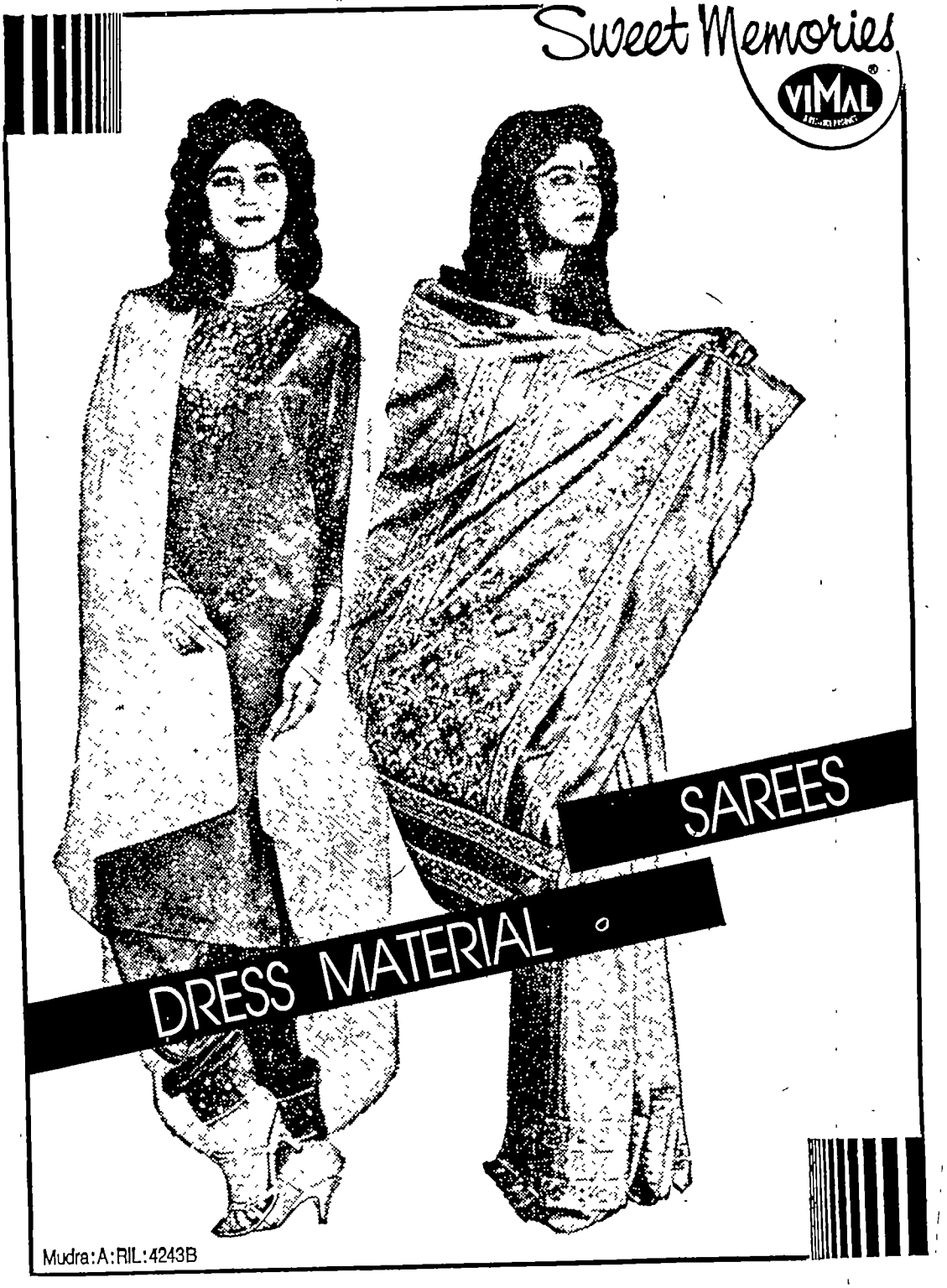
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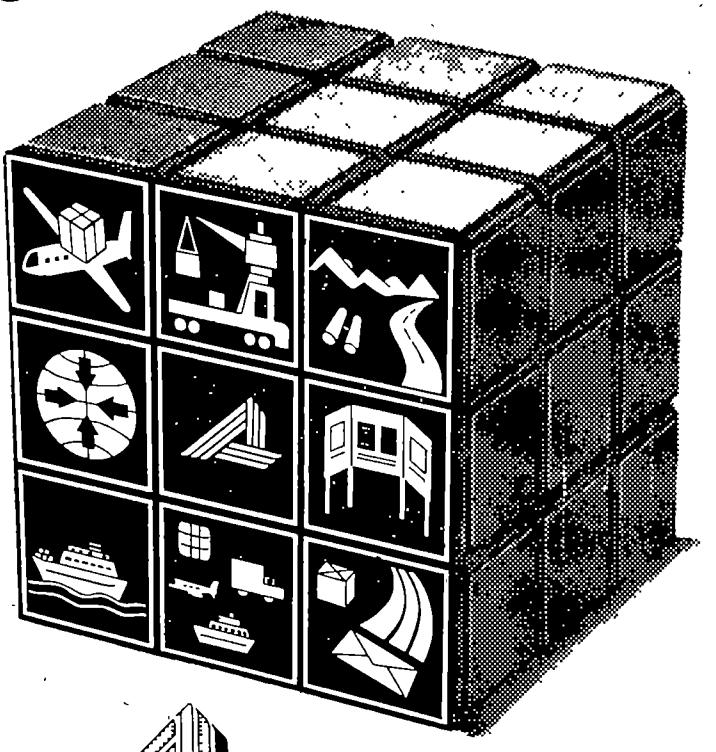

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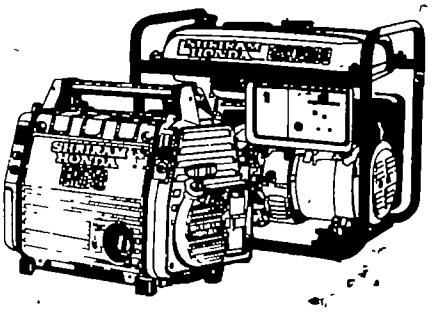

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a symposium on

children and childhood

symposium participants

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COVER
Designed by **Madhu Chowdhury** of Dilip Chowdhury Associates

The problem

WHAT do we know of the agency of children? In modern times, the child is viewed as an underdeveloped adult. Adulthood is an attainment, reached through a process of 'learning' the ways of the world to at an age when 'reasoned choice' is possible. But from the perspective of many ancient cultures, the child develops its agency in the womb. The child is a silent mover, indicating its wishes and urges: even signaling her/his readiness to move out of the protected environment of the womb into a new world. According to such logic, the child participates in its own birth – actively pushing its way out, in natural harmony with the mother's efforts.

The child gives, and receives, in love. That is the medium for a baby's development, and every child has the capacity to convey this fact and need. Unfortunately, not every adult is able to respond in appropriate ways and few of us grow up unscarred by the wounds thus created.

The wider environment today, the structuring of the world, is adult- rather than child-oriented. Children are thus often viewed as a problem, 'necessary evils', an embarrassment, sometimes even enemies, demons or 'brats'.

So what does childhood mean even for the 'privileged' child today? Do doses of chocolate and ice-cream compensate for deficiencies in appropriate attention and fine-tuned care? With women being wooed into careers and joint families giving way to nuclear units, there is a singular lack of attention to the plight of the child. Mobile Creches remains a pioneer in the effort to work towards quality child-care for the underprivileged child, but their efforts are yet to be matched by other agencies. Children of working mothers, with no access to wider or supportive family structures, are like fish out of water Creches, run in middle and lower middle class colonies, are usually clueless about basic ethics, leave aside child psychology or pedagogy. They believe in numbers, discipline, the value of television viewing and intensive academic coaching of two-year-olds. 'Because that is what parents want,' says the creche 'Aunty'.

I remember a quiet afternoon with my niece, then five. We take to fantasising. Hers develops into the desire to go off onto another planet, peopled only by children. She imagines the fun they will have, the games they will play, unrestricted by schedules and things-to-do. 'There will be two or three adults,' she relents after a while of this fantasy of adultlessness – 'they will do the cooking and see to where we are to sleep.' Which adults would they be? Musing, she restricts the choice to the condition that 'they should be able to run fast'!

Children are hardly typical victims. Unbelievably resilient, capable of innocence and honesty in the midst of lurking horrors, they play, fantasise, invent games. Dependent upon adults, they try to make the best of what can be strange and unfathomable situations. Quintessential survivors, given the minimum conditions of caring and nourishment, they are eager to cope, quick to learn.

What do we, adults, know of the inner world of children? We may have intimate memories of our own childhood, and perhaps a relationship with a child or two. But few of us care to go beyond, and deeper, to understand what is happening within the hearts and minds of children, as they absorb the world, and construct their own understanding of what is going on here.

As part of the processes of 'modernisation', the role of families and neighbourhood communities in child-care has diminished, and professional institutions such as the school and the creche or the anganwadi are supposed to have taken over crucial care and education functions. But in these professional institutions – which cater to millions of our children – basic tenets of child psychology are being regularly violated. Emergent values of aggression and competitiveness have so gripped the adult mind that parents are keen for their children to absorb these very values, giving less and less priority to the gentler, saner and more humane ones. It is likely that the present generation of children is exposed to some of the most crude values that human society has ever espoused. Television typifies and exaggerates these values. Denied any alternative values either in the lives of their parents or in society generally, can they escape being moulded by these?

While these questions are of paramount importance for an entire generation of Indians who are just-born, young or teenaged, they acquire a cutting edge when it comes to those who live in conditions of poverty. We hear of child workers, of street children, of vagabonds, beggars, orphans and runaways. Upper class children ride on conveyer belts leading to boxes marked 'successful', 'efficient', 'clean', 'prosperous', 'glamorous', and so on: affluence creates its own peculiar ailments. But what of those left out, the children, who ride on no conveyer belts or cars or airplanes, who barely know the meaning of water for a bath or clean water for drinking, who scavenge in the dustbins among the discarded orange peels, chocolate wrappings and Frooti cartons? As a nation, we pay them precious little attention. Little thought goes into planning for the well-being of these children.

Children cannot afford to be as short-sighted as the modern 'mature' adult. The child without a home, the child brought up in penury, the dalit child, the child growing up sexually abused: do such children have anything more than the dreams and aspirations for something else, something, somehow, different? The child is target for manipulation and insidious socialisation; but is still, always, somebody who has some space left over for dreams.

In an era of 'human resource development' we have infants being slaughtered at birth in Bihar and Tamil Nadu; in an era of 'women's empowerment' we have little girls traumatised by rape and sold into prostitution in metropolitan centres. The violent conditions in which children

labour have been brought to our attention by media reports on the matchmakers of Sivakasi, and the carpet weavers of Mirzapur: but children labour on, in units big and small, in fields, within and without homes. What is the future of a child who has grown up as a domestic servant? Why, in a country committed to democracy, does this child have no access to such skills and education as would enable her/him to make for herself/himself a life of dignity? What of the child who simply has no home, who has to earn each morsel of food, each scrap of clothing, each tiny coin – or else beg, borrow or steal – and yet has no shelter, no refuge?

If these children grow up frustrated, distorted, brutalised and violent it will be for no fault of theirs. Resilient, bright, replete with endless possibilities: yet the vibrancy is only too often crushed out of them. The brutalisation begins early – think of the anxious eyes of tiny beggars – babes in arms, stretching out their hands at busy crossings, destined to grow up running between vehicles when the lights are red. Is it alms that society owes them? What of the millions of malnourished children, growing up in poverty, handling household tasks as soon as their little hands develop finer motor skills, beginning to work in fields, factories, on streets, in wayside shops, in domestic service? Where are the fruits of development for the child whose family is displaced from the Narmada valley, or was displaced by the Damodar Valley Project, or any of the hundreds of 'national-growth' schemes? What is the meaning of childhood for millions of orphans, or children born with handicaps, in a society which is discarding its traditional acceptance for the weak and vulnerable, and developing no new support structures to ensure their survival?

The wonder is that even here there are images of tremendous resilience, of innocence, of great strength and courage There are images of creative protest There are children here who embody sensitivity and wisdom, who are leaders and visionaries. They sparkle with their own unique fire. Like plants, children lean towards the sun, throw deep their roots to draw in whatever nutrient is available.

These children are the most 'subaltern' of the subaltern – at the bottom of several heaps in terms of power, control and decision-making. Even as they grapple to survive, they remain in the ambit of imagination and myth. And from here comes a unique kind of subversiveness, a force for the future.

We need to listen to children for another reason, too. The directions of global development being espoused at international and national levels today are ways of violence, disharmony, destruction We need to seek out the alternatives – wherever there is space, there is possibility. Children represent creatures yet imperfectly 'civilised', integrated only partially into the dominant modes of thinking and being Maybe then we need to learn from them, from this 'fourth dimension'. May we learn to give to them, but let us not forget the bounty that we receive, and the more that we can receive the more we open ourselves to them.

These children, with their sweet transparency, provide a mirror to us, revealing our own inner motivations. The child who is termed 'mentally retarded' is often 'emotionally gifted': and reveals what we often hide: love, fear, anger, hope. Last Dussehra, street children in Kanpur were encouraged to note down their 'bad habits' on slips of paper, resolve to get rid of these habits and burn the paper in an effigy – they wrote about lying and stealing and abusing, but then asked the *didis*, 'Don't you have bad habits? Don't you want to get rid of your bad habits?'

The 'didis' – activists (of Sakhi Kendra) who run a shelter home for battered women and have recently begun working with street children too – did a bit of introspection and noted down their own shortcomings too, resolving to overcome these. As many adults who begin work with underprivileged children have discovered, the work is challenging but also, often unexpectedly, rewarding. The work changes adult perceptions and attitudes. Jasmeeta, who has been working with poorer children for years, discovered the inner value of 'play' and the real meaning of education through her work – from her observation of and interaction with the children. Pramila Balasundaram writes of the aspirations of mentally retarded children – children she has taken up as a personal cause, through a groupup called Samadhan. When Rahul describes the children of the *jeevan shalas* – life-education centres – part of the Narmada Bachao movement, one is struck by the surging energy of children inspired by new visions, and aspirations that are 'revolutionary' – a term that we, with our jaded intellects, can hardly appreciate anymore. Anuradha Joshi's work with the children of the U.P. hills is yielding a rich harvest of insights. So is the work of the Green Schools being run by the Deccan Development Society in Andhra, as reported by Rukmini Rao.

Adults who touch deeply the inner world of children are able to reflect and communicate something of that world to other adults. Yet when children's own expressions come across directly, there is, of course, a difference. In the selections from 'Chakmak', there is a poignancy and a stark matter-of-factness, as in the pieces from Madhya Pradesh – from cities and towns, villages and hamlets – which voice concern for a world not of their making, spelling out ideas for the future.

This issue of SEMINAR is dedicated to the future. It is an effort to listen to some of the voices brought here through Charkha, a development communications network, that *are* the future.

DEEPTI PRIYA MEHROTRA

Learning from children

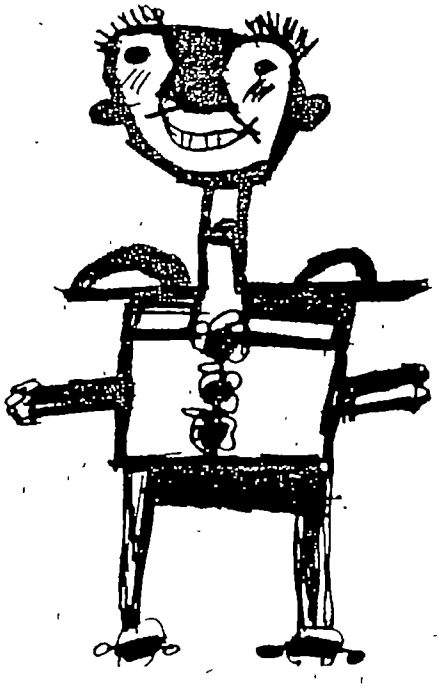
JOLLY ROHTAGI

IN 1974, I came back for a holiday from Canada, where I was studying. It was a hot summer in Delhi. I happened to visit the Triveni Art Gallery to see an exhibition of migrant labour children's art work. Such children had always intrigued me. While we studied in schools with strict discipline, these children were on their own and evolved their own creative games and their own systems

After I saw the exhibition of their art, I met Meera Mahadevan (she had founded Mobile Creches in 1970-71) and told her I wanted to work with these children. She looked me up and down – my blue jeans and all – and asked, 'What work will you do?' I said, 'Try me and see.'

In those days there was a hot-mix plant coming up at the ITO, where Mobile Creches had set up a school. Meera Mahadevan sent me there and to another centre, at a construction site behind Chanakya cinema. The children were involved in all kinds of activities, so I began to evolve programmes based on what they said and expressed. After a while, Meera Mahadevan said, 'Train all the teachers of Mobile Creche in these methods.'

My focus was to listen to what children say and sensitively direct that towards learning, so that it flows like water.



As related to Deepti Priya Mehrotra

Although the average span of a child's stay at the Mobile Creches is three months, yet some amount of learning has to go on within that time. So I evolved learning aids from the material at hand, for instance *ginti ki thaili* for counting – a bag to which knots can be added by the child as it learns to count.

Children often feel alienated from learning because in school they have a lot of material – bottle paints, paper – but at home there is much less. So I tried to maximise the use of resources, experiment with just a pinch of paint, utilise that and get the painting process going with just so much. We worked with craftspersons, utilising the few available resources as creatively as possible. How can a stick and paper be used to get so much? What are the skills involved? How is a necklace made? How can we use a pinch of paint and get so much out of it? That is why I work with materials like mud, *papier mache*, Madhubani colours and rope...so that learning can be both natural and rich.

'I never went back to complete my course in Canada. I stayed on and after a year and a half I joined Bal Bhavan as head of the Multi-Media Department, simultaneously working with Mobile Creches. We worked on value-based themes like cycles of life, cycles within everything, the cycle of seasons. There were a whole string of projects going on there, conducted by other people, like Amba Sanyal. I helped to enrich those projects. During

those years, there were interesting conversations with children – we took up themes around the five basic needs: air, food, water, clothing, shelter. I will give you some instances of such discussions

The themes for discussion would evolve from the children and would begin with them saying, 'There are too many people and everybody wants a big house. Should everybody have a big house? Can everybody have a big house?'

One boy said, 'Everybody should have a big house I want to have a big house. I will make a house with a hundred rooms.'

'How can you make such a big house?' the others asked.

Boy: 'My father is a doctor, I have money, I can make such a big house.'

Others: 'Others will also want a big house, then what?'

Boy: 'Then let them make it.'

Others: 'But everybody doesn't have so much money.'

Boy: 'Then let them earn the money!'

Others: 'Who makes these houses, can they have such big houses themselves?'

Boy: 'The labourers who make the houses can't have these houses. But if they want to, let them become doctors.'

Others: 'If the labourers become doctors then who will make your house?'

The boy had no answer to this. We had many such discussions on housing. The children said there are too many people, there is no room left on earth. What kind of housing do we want? What kind of earth do we want? They evolved many models of housing – one house on top of another, of another, of another .. People living on tops of trees. People flying. Houses flying. People sharing houses. Houses on wheels, so that the earth remains green. The children made lots of models, drawings – with clay, paper, *papier mache* – of different kinds of houses.

Such discussions became a daily feature and went on for some two or three hours. As many as 90 children, between 4-14 years, would take part. They came from different backgrounds: about a third were from middle class homes, the rest from the lower middle class – children of peons, of vegetable vendors: of course, no migrant labour children came here.

A discussion on: Is there a God? went on for days. A young member of the junior wing of the Communist Party said, 'Absolutely not!'; another child who was exposed to an *ashram* said, 'Of course there is a God!' So it went on, but as we had a rule that said every theme we took up had to be resolved, the group came up with a final resolution formulated on their own: Whether God exists or not has always been a mystery, and human beings have developed and evolved through the effort to solve mysteries. The search for knowledge has come about because there are mysteries human beings always wanted to know about – about the sun, the moon, the stars. .. As some mysteries get solved, more emerge. Some people call this process God, some call it lack of knowledge. It is because of this urge to solve mysteries that human beings are continuously evolving. The process of 'demystification' goes on..

There was a discussion on fashion – what kind of clothes are appropriate to wear in different seasons? Why do we 'do fashion'?

Tight terylene pants were then 'in' and one boy said he liked to wear those, although everybody said the right thing to wear in summer is cool cottons. Why did he prefer to wear terylene?

Boy: 'Just like that. I will wear them.'

Several children said that we should follow fashions; others said, no it is a bad thing. Questioned further, some came up with a reason. they said if we wear fashionable clothes we will look like big people

Who are big people?

'They are the ones who have money. Those who start the fashions. If we wear the same clothes then we will look like them. They are the ones who start fashions, then those fashions reach us.'

'What else?'

'They are the ones who have power – they can buy up everything, they can buy up the police.'

'What do these big powerful people do?'

'They earn money.'

'Where does the circle of power and money take you?' – the children wondered. They tried a new tack.

'Name some big people.'

'Gandhi, Nehru....'

'Were they big because they had money?'.

'No! Gandhi didn't even have money....'

'What did they have then?'

'They had knowledge.'

'What did they do to get knowledge?'

'They worked hard.'

So the children came around full circle to the value of work – you become a big man if you work hard and gain knowledge....

Another of our discussions was on food. Why doesn't everybody get enough food?

One child said, 'I will eat ice cream,' the others obejected, saying, 'Can everybody eat ice cream?' They worked on the problem of everybody not getting enough food to eat. I would give them information when they asked; they asked others as well. Finally, they put together a lot of information to conclude that the problem is due to a faulty distribution system. 'In the US pigs are fed corn,' they discovered, 'while children here can't get *bhutta* to eat!'

We also took up the theme of work: the children conducted surveys, then we made up games and models and gathered information on topics like – what are the different kinds of work that people do? What is important work? I remember some of the models – there was one of a *pundit*, hands folded, and of a *neta*, also with hands folded, as if asking for votes. These figures had slits in the head for money (all the items we made had to have a use, so these were piggy-banks as well). Thus these figures also became a sharp social comment.

Lalso ran a Sunday discussion group for Mobile Creches with older children. It was largely comprised of boys, girls were hardly able to come for the Sunday meetings The group met centrally, in the Bengali Market office. 1979 was the year of Gandhi's centenary and there was a discussion on him. I posed a question: Gandhiji always spoke the truth Is he relevant today?

The children said, 'Of course, we should always speak the truth. We should be obedient. We should respect our parents.'

But after a lot of discussion it turned out that we don't actually do so: we tell lies.

'Why shouldn't we tell lies?' the children asked. 'Who tells the truth nowadays, anyway?'

I asked the group: 'Which of you doesn't tell lies?' No hands came up.

The children said, 'How can we not lie? Wherever we go we find people lying – policemen, conductors – everybody is dishonest, why shouldn't we? There is cheating in exams – slips of paper (*pharre*) are smuggled in. People keep jumping the queue in the ration line, if I don't then I will just keep standing there....' Another boy said, 'My father would not let me come here. Then I asked him for money for a notebook and it is with that money that I have come.' Another boy said, 'My father gives me enough for just one way, so I say I am less than 12 years old to buy a half-ticket.'

We discussed where the money we give for a bus ticket goes. It goes to the DTC office, then to the Revenue Department, to the Income Tax Department... to various activities such as road-building, hospital-building and so on. So the children understood that by cheating the transport department, we are cutting away at the revenue to be used for our own benefit. They understood the need to think of the larger interest before seeking individual gain.

Another time, after communal riots in Moradabad, we had discussions on communalism. Hindu children in the group said Mulims are this and that; the Muslim children said Hindus are to blame, they are this and that. They talked about good Muslims and Hindus, and decided the problem is not one between people. They went into different issues, and came to the point where they asked how many in the police force are Hindu, how many Muslim. They found that there are hardly any Muslims in the police in the country!

When the discussion on bride-burning came up, some children asked, Why do people marry and then kill their wives? Some said, it is because of dowry. Others said, bride price is better (there were migrant labour children from Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and included tribals too). Then children recounted stories of how girls were ill-treated in their communities. They finally concluded that whether you pay a bride price or dowry, a woman is used She is not granted equal rights. Until women are granted equal status, they realised, the world will continue to exploit them.

In 1982, I started working with a group called Jan Madhyam, which tries to help handicapped children using the same techniques and experiments we used at the Bal Bhawan. My colleague Ranjana and I worked with some children in Jamia and Jan Madhyam developed out of our work together.

The handicapped child is not born with a problem, nor feel that he or she has a problem. The problem is created by the ignorance and indifference such children encounter. They have problems because of the way they are treated, even by their own families. Our surveys have revealed how some children are locked up or even chained like dogs by their families.

Our centre here (in a ramshackle house in Kailash Colony) is for girls, because handicapped girls usually have no options at all and are completely marginalised We offer a rehabilitation programme which provides individual education and training programmes for each child. It involves harmonious multi-media work and every child finds something to do, increasing his/her abilities, skills and confidence. The polytechnic we are planning will provide training in vocational skills to such children.

A multi-media package is useful because it offers the child a choice of options. That is the first step. It is very important for the child to learn to make choices. Multi-media also helps to identify a problem and then helps the child to deal with it. There was a girl whose family said, 'Oh she just doesn't talk.' We worked with this child and soon enough we found that she was not talking because she couldn't hear. And her family did not know that!

There was another child where the family said, 'He doesn't do anything.' We found that the child was so intelligent that he was bored with what he had and was supposed to do. Our multi-media programme gave him something to do all the time.

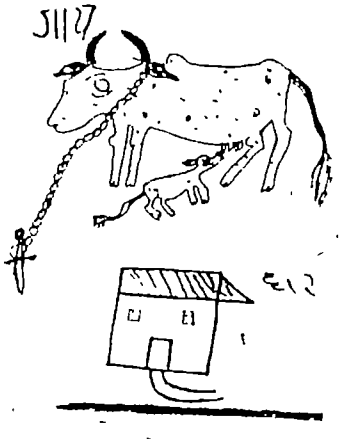
One child had a problem with his bladder and wet himself, sometimes even while in the group. So we developed a puppet that peed and told the children, 'We are showing you a puppet, if you don't like what it does, then blow at it.' As soon as we showed the children the puppet, this child got up, before anybody else had even thought of it, and began blowing it away, hard! Earlier, everybody called him a bad boy. Now his problem could be discussed, he had made it clear that he himself wanted to deal with the problem.

Children come to us from various places – from the National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD), various specialists...in fact, people from all over. Once they join, we collect the children and they spend the day with us.

Resources are a constant problem. We have to move from this house as the landlord has given us notice. People don't want to rent their houses to handicapped children. Now we are building a centre, in Aya Nagar, Mehrauli: it will be very far, of course, but what choice do we have?

Let inner rhythms grow

ANURADHA JOSHI



CHILDREN living in the rugged central Himalayan region (Jaunpur block of Tehri district, U.P.) have a peculiar set of problems. While their parents struggle to live off small and scattered fields, the only avenue for boys to earn an extra income is by selling milk in Mussoorie or working as labourers. The girls, on the other hand, are resigned to cutting grass or staying at home taking care of younger siblings. In such villages, a school is a symbol of escape from the drudgery of household chores and tough living conditions. Schools also provide them with prospects of a job in the cities, if they are lucky. Often the nearest government school is easily a good three hour climb from the village. Small wonder then, that a school in their own village is considered the greatest luxury by such children.

The world of children seems fairly simple and uncomplicated on the surface, their imagined fears often a mere imitation of the adult world around them. Their real fears are usually connected with size. They are small: others are big. Physical growth and strength are envied the most. 'The guruji is so big. When/how will I become as big as him?' Boys are preoccupied with the 'Am I stronger than him?' syndrome.

Usually, happiness means getting something–food (*laddus*, fruits, meat and fish) new clothes, shoes, prizes, books and so on. They look forward to special days like weddings, harvest-days, going to Mussoorie, school or *melas*. Or to visitors, like *didi* coming home from her in-law's house, or a visit by *mamaji* or *nanaji*. All that they ask of life are simple pleasures

like riding a horse or a bus, going to the shop near the village, a new road or electricity in their village, a hot water bath, being present at the birth of a calf or even being chosen to ring the bell in school...

Their sorrows are usually the absence of all their little joys. Graver issues – like a death in the family, the loss of a cow or goat, the high price of things in shops and their parents' inability to pay their school-fees – are also common concerns. Some children are miserable when goats are sacrificed to celebrate Maroj, a tribal festival. They are unhappy when another child in the family gets something and they are excluded or if there are no fruit trees in their village. They have work-related problems, like walking long distances to sell milk, collecting firewood or taking the cattle to graze One common complaint is that they are forced by their parents to skip school in order to help out with household chores. They miss their classes because of pressures at home and naturally lag behind in studies, which angers their teachers These children feel their parents do not realise that they must attend school regularly to do well in class.

Like adults, children have double standards as well Privately, they may express righteous anger towards unjust adult behaviour, like unfair beatings from their teachers and parents. Publicly, however, they do not talk about such things. On the other hand, they speak in cliches about the greatness/goodness/generosity of their family! 'My father is really great. He loves me a lot. He bought me a ball as big as a cow'.. . Exaggerated accounts (*gupp*) of things they have seen, bought or possess, are a common feature of their conversations with each other Making fun of other children, mimicking each other and teachers is also a part of this. Children whose families own a television set talk incessantly of films – stories, songs, actors and actresses – to an eager audience, who literally hang on every word. At times, children can be seen imitating adults or elders in the village, they discuss some recent quarrel using phrases and repeating abuses they have heard, just like old men and women. They are fascinated by stories of ghosts and witches and narrate these tales with great enthusiasm to a wide-eyed audience who listen with fear and interest.

A child's mind is often quite transparent, revealing the crazy manner in which ideas are jumbled up. When asked what he/she thinks or dreams about, in one sentence the child can say, 'I think I will become a doctor, a driver, a teacher, a film star, a good person, a rich man, a very big king....' Adults think in the same random manner but the difference is that when asked to write they make their thoughts sound sensible and intelligent.

The world of children may reveal nothing remarkable or strikingly different from the ordinary concerns of the adult world Indeed, how can we expect it to be otherwise? However, in a small way, something different and innovative is being tried out at the small village schools run by SIDH (Society for Integrated Development in the Himalayas) in Aglar valley. This is best illustrated by a glimpse into one such school.

Bindra, Sikandar, Neelam and Mukesh are ten years old and members of the discipline committee of their small school in Kandikhal, a remote hill village. The ease with which these children manage their multi-grade classes while awaiting the arrival of their teacher is impressive. They come early and see that the other children enter and sit quietly. The bell is then rung and a 10-minute meditation, ending with a prayer, is conducted. This happens regardless of the presence of their teacher. There are several such committees of children in the school for manning different areas like education, sports, cleanliness, agriculture and cultural activities Members of these different committees take their responsibilities seriously and have weekly meetings to evaluate their performances, without any intervention from the teacher. Thus Jayapal, their young teacher, is relaxed and able to concentrate on new ways of teaching which are fun and painless, both for him and the children. He does not have to expend the better part of his energy to punish/scold/shout to be heard by the children. This is not something unique about Jayapal's school, but is true to a lesser or greater degree, of almost all schools run by SIDH. How was this done?

Perhaps the answer lies in the unique use of meditation at SIDH. In fact, all its teachers-facilitators have participated in several 10-day meditation camps of *Vipassana* (a Buddhist technique of meditation). Three years ago, they had 3-day meditation camps for children, with far-reaching results. Operationally, this means a 10-minute session everyday – before and after class – of *Anapana* (or observation of breath). These 10-20 minutes of regular practice, coupled with a bit of counselling, have led to making the children responsible supervisors.

Today they are more confident, ask questions in class, participate and manage awareness-raising programmes in their village. At times their confidence proves too challenging for the teacher, which is why they have had to think of ways to divert their energy into constructive areas of school management.

Meditation followed by counselling has also resulted in remarkable changes in other areas. In the past, a common complaint of the students was that their pens/pencils/erasers were missing. After a few months of regular meditation, the teacher asked the class to try an experiment: whenever a child felt an urge to possess something which belonged to someone else, she should watch her breath for a few moments before giving in to the temptation. The children were asked not to suppress their feeling but only to stop for a few moments to observe the breath and notice any change in rhythm. This led to a marked drop in the number of petty thefts. 'Earlier a lot of my time used to be taken up, trying to cope with these complaints and trying to retrieve the lost items, I hardly do that now,' a teacher remarked

This could have far-reaching implications for those concerned with the ills of society and that of consumerism. Greed could be controlled or perhaps 'observed', by simply controlling one's breath: the rest, as SIDH has shown, will follow.

How long can I continue to be different?

RUKMINI RAO

DALIT children reflect on their lives: Where can we go from here? What is our future? We want to change the world. Why are we left out?

Today's discussion in the Pachhasaale (Green School) is about our plans for the future. The adolescents in the group come from more than 20 villages, some living at home and some in the social welfare hostels of Zaheerabad in Medak district. All of them belong to the dalit community and other 'low' castes. The Deccan Development Society (DDS) in Medak district has set up a Green School for drop-outs and children who have never been to school. This is their only opportunity for learning and creating a better future. The children narrated their stories to each other and tried to understand their own situations by sharing experiences.

'Ever since my childhood I can recall only a few days of happiness. I went to my village school first and then to Itikapally village school for two years. From Class V to VII, I was in Narayankhed, 50 kms. from my home. My parents, however, called me back to do coolie work in the fields. After some months in the village, I started a night school for other children who did not go to school. After some months I was told that the DDS was running a summer camp for working children. I really wanted to study further so I decided to join the camp. I studied there for two months and was enrolled in the hostel. Since I am too old to go to

regular school I have joined the Pachhasaale.

I like being here because I can learn five or six skills. I like sowing and using the library the most and am preparing to take my Xth class exams through the Open School system, which will take another two years. For the future – I want to become a teacher, preferably in this school, and teach children like myself who did not have an opportunity to go to regular school.

K. Anil Kumar, 16 years, Nagwar

'When I was a little girl everyone took good care of me because I was the only girl in the family. I started going to government school but because the "Sir" beat me up one day I ran away and never went back. My grandfather took me everywhere with him, including to the "Kallu Compound" (the toddy shop) each evening, where I would also get some toddy to drink. In those days the DDS set up a *sangam* for adults in the village. After a while they also set up one for children. I joined this group and also started going to night school. I worked during the day and studied at night. I did all kinds of work: I went to pick potatoes, mulberry leaves to feed silkworms and to weed in the fields. After joining the sangam I went on a tour. All of us children enjoyed ourselves. Over the years, many visitors have come to the DDS. They all appeared highly educated. I was very sad when I saw children going to school. I asked myself: "Why do I have to work in the sun all day long? If I could read and write I would have had a better life too."

In 1992 Satheesh Sir asked me and Narsimlu whether we would like to join the Pachhasaale. I insisted I would go to school only if my own master continued to teach me.

I have many ambitions but feel these cannot be fulfilled. Already my uncle and family have been pressurizing me to marry. I have resisted them for the last two years. My uncle refuses to talk to me because I disobeyed him. But how long can I continue to be different? I am afraid of marriage because everyone seems so unhappy. My mother has to slog hard and my father – he tries to ruin the family by gambling: he doesn't work but is always busy.

Sometimes I feel it is better to have small wishes, maybe become a teacher and teach children like myself. I have also learnt to make herbal medicines. But if you really want to know what I would like most to be I would like to become a lawyer. As a lawyer I will bring justice to people in the village.'

Narsamma, 14 years, Pastapur

Sudha Rani was named Urramma by her parents. She didn't like the name and changed it herself when she was 12. Her life has been one of struggle against the chains of poverty. Urramma's story: 'From the time I was eight, my mother sent me out to work in the fields. I was never allowed to go to school. When the night centre was set up in my village I was keen to attend it. But my mother refused to let me go because she said I was too old (I was 11). I begged the night school teacher to convince my mother. She talked to her but my mother still would not let me go to school. I quietly did my work during the day and started going to night school. I went to the Summer School at Jharasangam for two months and was then sent to the hostel. When I came to the summer camp I cried for the first 12 days. Gradually, I started enjoying myself and forgot my parents. Now I come to school everyday by bus. The hostel is like a jail. It is a girl's hostel where parents, including fathers, are allowed to come in. But if anyone else, even a brother, comes the warden is suspicious. If any of us has a headache they ask us: "Did anyone harass you on the street? Were any boys after you?" If anyone has a stomach-ache they ask: "Are you pregnant?" The food is appalling: I don't like it. But all of us have to eat it. If we don't, we go hungry for the whole day.

I would like to complete my high school. I also want to learn to sew well. We are all afraid of exams. Last year all the good students in the government schools and in my village failed. They were all so disappointed. Often, due to the problems in the hostel and the warden's rude behaviour, many of us go home when we should be in school. I am not sure if I can live here till I complete my studies. My father is now supportive and wants me to study further.'

Sudha Rani (Urramma), 14 years, Mamidgi Village

Narsimlu gets his name from his work on the permaculture farm which demonstrates organic farming practices. Since the age of nine, he has been working on the DDS farm and studied at the night school. For the last two years he is at school. He was released from bondage but had to work since he supported his family.

'I joined the Pillala Sangam (children's group) and started doing many new things. We learnt to raise nurseries, read and write in the evening, and performed *Bhagavatam* (traditional theatre based on epic tales). We practised hard and put up a show at Pastapur. The whole village came to watch us. We were garlanded and given gifts. Our play *Krishnarjuna Yuddham* was broadcast on Doordarshan. We performed in villages and at the university. Our faces were made up and we wore silk costumes. Our group earned Rs. 300. With my share of money I bought books for my little brother.

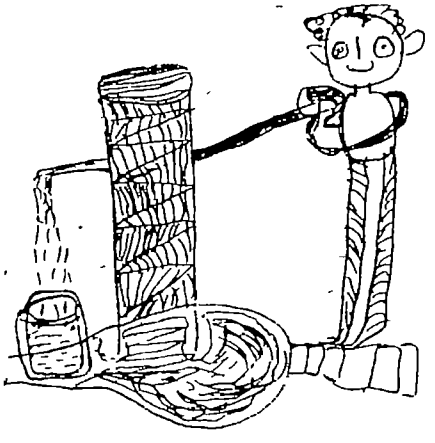
I was very happy on the farm because I learnt something new everyday. Venkat Sir explained all kinds of facts about permaculture to me. I felt I was learning all the time. When Pachhasaale started two years ago, I was happy to go to school and felt I must study further and work in an office. I wanted to be a big officer, do an important job. But now I am not sure. It is not easy to complete higher studies. I am confused. I am happy with permaculture, maybe I should go back to that. I am also excited about taking my Xth class exams and have started preparing for them. Sometimes I don't go to school because I feel I am not making much progress.

My father has a small bit of land where he grows sugarcane. I want him to change his farming practices but so far he has not paid any attention to my advice.'

Perma Narsimlu, 15 years, Pastapur

Children voice concern

ANITA RAMPAL and TULTUL BISWAS



IT IS now commonly recognised that even young children do have a deeper *social and political awareness*, and actively respond to the complexity of the world around them. In fact, interesting studies regarding children's political socialisation have been conducted in many countries which look closely at the way their understanding grows or changes as they progress from age five onwards (Moore and others).

This is a fascinating area and covers a wide range of questions. Do children recognise geo-political units such as the village, city, state or nation? How does this understanding grow in relation to the development of spatial inclusiveness? Who do they think is the 'boss' of the country and what do they think he does? How is the chief executive selected? What are elections? Have they heard of political parties and politicians? What does the government do? What are laws and who makes them? How do they understand political authority? What image do they have of a policeman? Do they differentiate between 'uniformed' persons working for the government from the others, say a postman from an auto driver? What kind of occupations do they identify with and why? How do children respond to more contemporary issues of concern?

Does this political awareness vary with the sex of the child, or with their ethnic background and community perceptions? How is learning about these issues influenced by their own emotional and affective responses? Which ideas are more a product of social learning from external stimuli from their environment, and which can be attributed to their internal development of cognitive capacities?

Though we continue to get feedback from a variety of sources, it would be interesting to conduct systematic studies in our own context to see how children

* We wish to acknowledge the help we received from Rajesh Utsahi (and his tremendous memory) in initially trying to identify suitable pieces of children's writings, published in over a hundred issues of Chakmak, from among which this selection was finally made

respond to such questions. In western countries it was found that though children first became aware of their local jurisdiction and then progressed to larger units like the province, state, country – their awareness of persons governing such units was in the reverse order That is, they first identified the president or prime minister and then successively came down to the governor, mayor and so on (Greenstein; Jahoda) Do Indian children follow the same pattern or are they more familiar with the local executive, such as the *sarpanch*? Contrary to the observations made in the West, do children here begin to recognise politicians and the existence of political parties much earlier? Is there any difference between the awareness patterns of our rural children as compared to urban ones?

Children from deprived and often exploited communities would tend to construct their picture of the world through their own intimate experiences. For instance, a significant segment of non-Anglo or minority American children are found to be consistently negative about the police and the law, reflecting the deep resentment and sensitivity those communities have towards law enforcing authorities (Moore and others, and references therein). In the Indian case, similar situations of conflict could reflect in how tribal children view forest officials, or how minority children from riot affected areas look upon policemen. Moreover, there may also be differences of perceptions of children from backward castes towards those in authority, those that seem to wield unbounded power, and have traditionally belonged to the dominant castes. How do these children, with lived experiences that strongly differ from the moralistic textbook notion of the 'government for their good', the 'police for their protection' or even a 'school for learning', manage to resolve such cognitive conflicts in their young minds? More significantly, what recourse do they have to articulate their minds, to give expression to their ideas and to allow their concepts to crystallise in an ambience of congenial criticality?

One traditional area of interest has been to look for differences in the way boys and girls develop political awareness. Schoolboys have been found to be consistently more knowledgeable and interested than girls (Greenstein). School as well as society, even in industrialised countries, seem to perpetuate the notion that political activity is the realm of male interest and most traditional heroes and role models in positions of power have continued to be male. Though we have not analysed children's writings from this perspective, there are experiences to suggest that such a bias exists here as well.

In a recent article (R Paliwal, 1995), we notice that the girl child responds with typical 'disinterest' and confusion as compared to the boys. However, it is clear that girls will need to be consciously encouraged to think and discuss such issues more frequently. In addition, concerted attempts are required to provide young children more exposure to contemporary role models of women who have exercised power even at local levels of decision making, and those, like the Chipko activists, who have also initiated effective political action.

Chakmak is a monthly magazine for children brought out by Eklavya, a voluntary organisation devoted to education and activities of the People's Science Movement. As a participatory strategy in curriculum development a fictitious character called Sawaaliram had been conceived, to whom children could address their queries, and from whom they would also receive personal replies to their letters. This was one way to get direct feedback from children about the curriculum and identify areas of their interest. When letters from them started pouring in by the hundreds, and the response to the special pages reserved for children in the teachers' bulletin 'Hoshangabad Vigyan' grew, there was need for an independent forum for them That was how, some 12 years back, Chakmak was born. Since then there has been a concerted attempt to encourage and even provoke children to contribute to the magazine, which reserves special space for what they write and draw, subjecting them to minimal editorial interventions. In addition, there are many other pages written by adults, which focus on both the creative and cognitive aspects of children's developmental needs.

The magazine reaches out to predominantly rural children, and is supplied to every government middle and high school of Madhya Pradesh, besides the individual and bulk subscribers from other states. It has a wide spectrum of readers and contributors, ranging from the very young who send in only their drawings and need to be read aloud to by an adult, to adolescents and even adults.

People associated with Chakmak and the other educational programmes of Eklavya have continuously interacted with children through various fora and media. There is a concerted attempt to provide them more stimulating and creative experiences, to help develop their critical abilities, while trying to understand how they feel, think, respond and learn.

Responses of children gathered both from informal discussions and from their writings reveal that even at the age of 11-14 years they are capable of analysing complex layers of their immediate social reality (R. Paliwal and C.N. Subramaniam) and, given the opportunity, can relate this contextually 'embedded' knowledge to more distant contexts. Unlike urban children from 'protected' homes, which often try to shield them from the 'harsh realities' of the world outside, these children live among those very realities, and often develop a tacit sense of the inherent 'politics' of, say, money lending, *zamindari* or even kinship However, like all others they cannot understand the encapsulated generalisations or moralisations found in their social studies textbooks, which deal with very abstract ideas in a highly simplistic, remote and didactic fashion.

What children write for Chakmak provides many insights into their way of looking at the social and political world. In fact, we find that even when they ostensibly talk about non-political issues,

such as their school or their teacher, they often make serious political comments about the present state of the education system, the teacher's authoritative role or unjust behaviour, and the dilemma between school and child labour. Moreover, such comments are articulated in a variety of language styles, which range from straightforward prose and satire to verse However, they are encouraged to retain their own language (even dialect), not emulate adult styles, or be overly bothered about 'correct' grammar.

Children write to Chakmak on all kinds of topics in all kinds of ways The very young ones send in drawings and doodles, or sometimes dictate their 'essays' to adults They write about dolls or dogs, the *mela*, the *sapera* – anything that takes their fancy The older ones may start writing about serious issues, or pen down longer and more detailed observations, contribute sophisticated puzzles, and also attempt different genres and styles of expression

However, for this article we have made a specific selection of those pieces which reflect their interest in, and awareness of, their social and political world. It includes articles, stories, poems and letters which have appeared in Chakmak over the last 10 years, written by children and adolescents roughly between the ages of 10-18 years. For the sake of convenience we have chosen to divide these pieces in the following thematic (or stylistic) categories: The world of 'politics'; satire on social realities; the world of school, issues related to gender; social beliefs, faith and superstitions, communal riots, the Bhopal gas tragedy

The World Of 'Politics' Elections and panchayats form a dramatic backdrop not only for Hindi films but also for children's writings The air of excitement and anticipation that pervades election time, and the 'strange' behaviour of politicians, with polite pleas and lofty promises, helps to trigger their curiosity and goads them to pen down their comments, or even to create stories around the popular theme Unlike in the West, children here tend to easily identify politicians by obvious visible symbols associated with the stereotypical figure. They clearly recognise the attire, garlands, vehicles, surrounding crowd of 'supporters', sloganeering and speeches, and characteristic feudal stance, which they see either in their immediate environment or through the media. In addition, they witness scenes and discussions about the *panchayat*, about the exploitative authority of the local *zamundar*, *thakur* or even the male 'head' of the family, or they may even happen to participate or hear about political rallies and processions.

Before the elections, after the elections
Whenever there are elections in our village, politicians (*neta log*) come to our house and give us money, clothes and sweets and say, you must vote for us. We shall get your house a tap, electricity and a road. A pump for your field, a loan from the bank and many more such temptations are offered When the elections come prices fall and they say, '*aapki sarkaar, aapke dwaar*' (your own government, at your doorstep).

But later if someone wins the election he doesn't return to the village for 6-7 months. When they do come they stay shut in the house of a *seth* (rich man). We have to go to their doorstep. But they say they have no time. We have time for them but they have no time for us And if they happen to hear that we need a bank loan, they come along personally but take away half the money. But we have to pay for that

This is why the poor do not benefit from the government schemes, and the rich become richer, the poor poorer. If the lakhs of rupees wasted during elections are used to remove poverty from the country it would become prosperous

HEMANT SHARMA, Kannod, Dewas, (July 1990)

A longer, humorous piece describes the electioneering process in a candid and highly expressive colloquial language He writes: *'Maine socha ye aadmi kaye ke maro chilla raho hai Baake tange men bahut sare jhanda gade thhe...* ' We cannot recreate the actual flavour of this piece in its original dialect, and shall translate only a part of it here.

When I saw the elections
I wondered why this man was shouting so loudly He had many banners and flags tied to his *tonga*. I thought they were there to stop the wind.... Someone said 'Make way, Neekhraji is coming.' I said that till now I had heard only of Neekhra milk. Now whatever is this new Neekhra stuff? A man came with many garlands and folded hands. His forehead covered with red *gulal*. I was told, 'This man has stood for the Lok Sabha elections.' I woke up the next day and, my god, what do I see! Our wall and all others are covered with the *panja-panja, kamal-kamal* (the election symbols of palm and lotus). I thought, why we had just white-washed our wall and these people have ruined it! At this I happened to utter a curse.

CHANDRASHEKHAR CHOUDHARY, class 6, Pipariya, (November 1985)

The next piece, though candidly brief, shows what the child thinks of her town council which had usurped her school classroom:

Cruel nagar palika
The nagar palika has taken one room of our school. A board saying public library is hung on it. But this library is never open, leave aside the question of reading. In the absence of this room many girls of our school now sit outside in the hot, cold and rainy weather. But the people of the nagar palika have no pity on these girls sitting outside. How cruel these nagar palika people are!

RAJKUMARI GOYAL, Namli, (March 1988)

The following incident is narrated by a girl who often writes on women's issues, and the following appears to be a fiction she has created around a panchayat meeting which she dramatically weaves into a story line. (We present here an edited version.)

Why is a woman a slave?
It happened one day. The people of the village were collecting at the *chaupal*. I

asked my mother 'Ma, why are these people collecting here?'

My mother said, 'For the panchayat?'

I asked, 'Whose panchayat?'

She said, 'I have to have an answer for every question of yours. I don't know anything.'

I asked lovingly, 'Do tell me, ma.'

She said, 'Because Shyamu has badly beaten up his wife '

Shyamu was called and asked, 'Why have you beaten your wife?'

He promptly replied, 'I had asked her to hurry up and finish cooking to go to the field She did not reach the field by ten o'clock and the manager got annoyed. This is why I beat her.'

She was about to say something when she was asked to keep shut. She returned home crying and wailing. It is said that *panch* is *parameshwar* (the supreme deity). But only for men not for women. In our society there are many women who are kept slaves like sheep or cattle. Do they have no rights? After all, why are they slaves?

KALPANA DUBE, class 10, Mardevra, Chhatarpur, (November 1991)

A student's response to the large anti-dam rally at his village, Harsud, itself threatened by submersion by the proposed Narmada Sagar dam

Sankalp mela in my village

Today in my village Harsud there was a massive *sankalp* (oath taking) mela.... Since 4-5 days there had been many rallies against the destructive dam. On 27 September all arrangements had been made A large rally of 20,000 people took place There were people of all ages from Maharashtra, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and other states I too participated in the rally.

'No one shall move, there shall be no dam.' 'We shall struggle against every oppression ' 'We want development not destruction.' These were some of the slogans being raised. There was so much enthusiasm among these people that I cannot describe it

RAJENDRA MALVIYA, class 8, Harsud, (November 1989)

We end this section with evidence of direct political action by a young girl (age 10), who has been writing regularly and also keeps a personal diary. Through a letter to the editor, she calls for support from other children to form a *sangathan* against liquor In fact, we recently came to know that she has already received many replies which she has personally responded to and also diligently recorded in her register!

Alcohol: a letter to the editor

Dear Editor, ... I want to make people understand that alcohol is a poison. I think Chakmak should help me. Rest is up to Chakmak.

Alcohol is a poison. It can make people rot It harms poor people. The poor drink cheap liquor. It is often adulterated. Many poor people die like this and it makes our country weak. If this is not stopped it will make our country weaker. I do not want this to happen. So why not remove the pain of others? The elders are deaf, so we children must get together and help the country improve We will also make a sangathan The government has bungalows and cars. Why should it worry about the country? Those who are with me write to me. Adults can also write. Do write your name, age and address. Do not fear anybody, one who fears is already dead.

TINA MISHRA, 10 years, Bhopal (October 1995)

Satire on Social Realities: In the earlier section we saw how children wrote about the strange, bewildering, often amusing or even depressing world of politics, and also suggested their own mode of political action to correct the present state of things in the country. In this section they use satire, through both prose and verse, to make more pungent comments on the actual condition of their roads, their hospitals, or more generally about child labour, corruption and poverty which seem to have become endemic.

The roads of Harda

Our Harda roads are made specially for 'express' vehicles. Just as Paris is famous for its roads made of glass, the roads of Harda are famous for their bumps. Som three years back, Harda roads were sui able only for aeroplanes, but people pro tested and the roads were remade. Th roads did get constructed but such th soon the hospitals got 'house full'.

You may or may not like this satir but you must tread carefully on the roac of Harda.

RAJESH SINGH RATHOR, class Harda, M.P. (May 199

Mera Bharat mahan

Pait me roti nahin / tan par kapda nahi nahin sir par makan hai phir bhi garv kahte hain hum/ ki bharat hamara mahc hai./ Jin hathon men hone the khilone/ j hathon men honi thi pustaken/ un hathc men hotel ki jhoothi platen hain/ u hathon men boot polish ka saman hai/ ph bhi garv se kahte hain hum/ ki hama bharat mahan hai.

Edited version:

No food in our stomach, not a cloth on o bodies, or a roof over our heads, yet v proudly declare that our country is gre Hands that should have played with to or held books are today washing dir plates or polishing shoes, yet we prouc declare that our country is great.

NILESH KUMAR RATHOR, class I Khargone (November 198

Hospital gatha (Hospital saga)

Hospital ki tumhe sunata hun kaha yahan ke karmachariyon ki cha manmani/ Chahe bimari ho ya dukhta pait,/ pahle doctor ke ghar jakar unka rate/ Sau-do-sau ka parcha banayeng phauran bharti ke liye hospi pahunchayenge/ Yahan machharon a khatmalon ki bharmar hai/ awaz karo nurse ki phatkar hai.

I tell you the story of the hospital, pr where employees rule the roost and ha their way/ Whether you are ill or hav stomachache/ first go to the docto house to pay his rate/ Charging a fat f for a hundred or two/ to admit to t hospital they promptly send you/ W swarms of bugs and mosquitoes around/ see the nurse's wrath if you d make a sound.

PANKAJ SHARMA, class 8, Har Hoshangabad (October 19

The World of School. This is the longest section, probably because Chakmak itself has grown out of an effort to restructure the present pattern of education and spark off a change, to make it an 'enabling' and meaningful experience for all our children Its readers often raise issues and questions regarding school and the kind of education it imparts They are bewildered, even pained, by the strange and oppressive behaviour of their teachers, or might write to say how they are torn between school and work. Older ones make more discerning comments about the discrimination they face in school, which serves a limited purpose only for the dominant classes and offers no meaningful education. Often teachers are themselves frustrated by the system and give up any semblance of teaching. A student of class 11, (now a sensitive journalist and a community leader) writes a true story, '*Padhaai ke liye ladaai*' or 'A fight to study', about how they were forced to act, taking matters in their own hands It clearly reveals how, with all the sophistication of political action, they waged a systematic struggle to change things and get some teaching done in school.

This is what my madam is like

I go to school everyday My teacher is a very religious *pooja paath* person, that's why I don't get along with her too well However, I like my school very much. I have good friends and I have great fun with them

One day I was sitting in the class. My head teacher came in. She started saying weird things about God. I got up and said, I have never seen God, and here you are making up everything yourself. She got irritated and asked me to get out The next day my teacher asked me to call someone from home and get my 'TC' (transfer certificate to leave school)

NICHOLAS BERNE, class 5, Harda (April 1990)

What kind of a reward?

One day my maths teacher asked me a question. I was the only one who could answer her. I was very happy thinking that sir would give me a pat for it. He was pleased but asked me to slap each boy in the class. I was scared and said I could not do it. I also did not think it right to slap my classmates like this So I said, 'Sir, I cannot slap.'

At this, the teacher got infuriated and said, 'O K. if you cannot do it come I shall teach you how to slap.' Saying this he gave me a tight slap on my cheek. Tears came to my eyes. The whole day I felt sad and thought was this slap the only reward for my correct answer?

VIVEK KULSHRESHTHA, class 7, Gwalior, (November-December 1993)

The fight to study (edited version)

It happened about two years back. I was studying in class 8. In the Malhanwada school of Bankhedi block in district Hoshangabad one teacher taught maths in class 8. She brought along her young toddlers to class and spent most of the time in looking after them. She was least concerned about those students who came to study after having walked long distances to school; what expectations their parents had and what difficulties they faced in sending them to study.

This carried on for six months. In the half-yearly exam all students got a zero mark. How could we then think of a good future for ourselves? We all started to wonder what we could do. Some of us felt we should complain to the headmaster. But the boys from rich homes, sons of prosperous farmers, refused to do so, even if they had to fail in the final exam. However more than half of us boldly decided to go to the headmaster.

The next day the headmaster saw 10-15 students approaching him and got worried about why so many had come to see him 'Why have you come?' he yelled angrily. 'We have come with a request Sir, our maths teacher does not teach us.' Before we could complete our statement he blew his top, 'Of course she teaches you, only you scoundrels do not study. Go away now. She will teach you '

But nothing changed....We had a small meeting We were worried about those of us who were poor and could not afford to repeat school next year if we failed. We spoke to the teacher too but nothing happened. Then I thought of writing an application to the district inspector of schools (DIS). And we decided to have a open meeting of all students of classes 6-8 The next day all of us ran way from school after two periods. About a kilometer from school is the Doodhi river. Some 50-60 of us sat in the *arhar* field The farmer began to shoo us away, saying 'I know you will destroy my plants'. We explained to him that we had to discuss how to get our maths teacher to teach us, and he was pleased. We discussed many things and finally everyone decided to write to the DIS Two three of us drafted the application and all except one boy and two girls signed it. We collected money and sent it by registered post. I offered to give a copy to the headmaster. He was mad with anger and asked us to own up. All of us stood up and quietly suffered the caning.

The village panchayat called a meeting of the school committee for the first time. They threatened students with expulsion and even said they would lock us up in jail. Most students buckled under this pressure and pointed that it was I who had written the application. The headmaster said to me, 'You try to do netagiri and incite other students. You will be expelled. Bring your father to school.' I said, 'I am at fault, not my father. He has no time to come here. If you want do strike my name off, but at least teach the students.'

Finally everyone understood that things could not go on like this. But the education department did not conduct any enquiry. Perhaps, they are not legally entitled to take action on such matters. The whole episode had such an effect that our teacher began to teach seriously, and taught even at night and on Sundays. All students passed in the class 8 exam and two came on the merit list.... This experience taught me many things. I learnt that one has to highlight facts very clearly. We had not been able to explain the issue properly so our case had become weak. And I also learnt what it means to project the true situation.

Mayaram Sarathe, class 11, Tagore High School, Bankhedi (July, 1985)

We end this section with a piece that appeared as an editorial note, but which had arisen out the experiences narrated by a school student of Dewas. The Dewas field centre of Eklavya has helped initiate and support an active network of Chakmak Clubs all over the district, which are constituted and also managed by the children. Within the town there has been an active group of young people who have conducted many campaigns under the banner of 'Jan Chetna Samooh'. This note was prepared to initiate a public debate on the present system and a concerted campaign against cheating, which had proved to be effective and had actively involved many prominent individuals, including those from the administration

Tell me why I should not cheat?

I now study in class 12 Just the mention of an examination gives me the shivers. When I try to think of the reasons, I recall the entire experience from class 1 to this day

From class 1 to 4, I did not realise what an exam is since I automatically went from one class to another. In the class 5 exam our teacher wrote the answers on the blackboard and said this was the 'board examination'. I had no problem in classes 6-7 since I was getting tuition, and in the class 8 exam my father had also paid some extra money to my teacher. In class 9 I benefited from the 'general promotion', and passed the 10th exam after memorising 5-7 answers from the 'question bank' printed by the Board. 11th was a local exam so I passed. Now I am faced with the 12th exam. I have never studied seriously. Because the school did not bother to teach properly and no one at home paid any attention. Now I feel very sad and annoyed with my school and also my parents

My father says I should attend coaching classes or even pay money to someone if required But the foundation of my studies is so weak that even on trying I cannot understand anything. Now you tell me what can I do if I do not cheat?

This is not a fictitious story but the experiences of a school student of Dewas. In our city there are thousands of students in the same situation. After all who is responsible for this: teachers, parents, the education system, or the present social structure? Teachers blame parents, parents hold teachers responsible. And children continue to suffer. Will people arrive from somewhere outside to improve this situation? If each teacher or parent continues to lament helplessly then we children can never get educated and shall remain barely literate. Do not then expect anything great from us. Please let us think and act now

Issues Related to Gender: Schools, teacher, *padhai* (studies), punishment... these seem to be favourite topics among children. They like schools, they dislike their heavy *bastas* (bags), they despise teachers who beat, they want to go to school and not to work...the list goes on One response from Kalpana Dube of Mardevra stands apart. This piece, written in the form of a conversation, vividly describes how a 16-17 year old girl is expected to seek her place in the home and the hearth, not in school. It also tells us about the courage required for a girl living in a small village to travel to another place to study and the biases such children and their parents have to fight against These and other such contributions raise a voice against the gender biases prevalent in our society today Where some simply record an observation of differentiation experienced by girl children, others go ahead to question it. Some despair at the serious state of affairs, others defy it.

Girl's studies

One day I got ready for school and went to the bus-stand. Our village school has classes only till 8th. To study further, we have to go to another place called Shahgarh, about 5-6 kms. from our village. When the bus came my friend and I got on.

We were talking to each other. An old man sitting near us asked us, 'Which class are you studying in, child?'

I said, 'Class 10.'

He looked stunned and after some time said, 'Don't your parents have any shame?'

I said, 'Dadaji, shame about what?'

At that he said, 'What times we live in! Little girls are answering back like this.'

Then my friend said, 'Why Dada, what are you saying? We have not said anything to you.'

At that time the conductor of the bus came there and asked, 'What happened?'

Before I could say anything the old man said, 'Nothing. I wonder what kind of parents these girls have that they send their daughters to study. That too to another village.'

I was stunned to hear this....

KALPANA DUBE, Mardevra, Chhatarpur, M.P. (October 1992)

Are girls any less?

Are girls only meant to wash clothes, clean utensils, cook food for the family? Can they not study and do bada kaam (larger things)? If you make them work they will get busy in it. If you let them study from childhood they will study. They will come to know of new things when they study. Then you can encourage them to read the newspaper. Then ask them about their hobbies. Suppose a girl says she likes drawing. Then ask her to draw when she has done her studies. Boys are encouraged like this. Why not girls? Are they not human?

Nowadays, of course, most girls are sent to study. But there are still some people who bring up a son with a lot of love: if they have a daughter they only scold her, beat her and make her work.

... Sometimes some bad parents send their daughters to school but make her do all the house-work also. And when they grow up they are married off with dowry.

TINA MISHRA, Habibganj, Bhopal, M.P. (November-December 1993)

Being sensitive, vigilant and active for the betterment of one's own life is one step towards empowerment. Trying to bring about a change in society, stop some practice or tradition that adversely affects a woman's life is a different story altogether. Here are 15 year old Divya and Monica trying to stop the child-marriage of their classmate. They keep no stone unturned but nothing fruitful happens. All

they get at the end of a hectic and tense day is disappointment. To add to it other friends make a laughing stock of them

But do they lose hope? No, they decide to write the details to Chakmak, hoping it will be published, that people will read the truth and probably learn from it

Letter to the editor

I am writing about a true incident. After appearing for our class 10 exams my friend Monica and I were thinking and planning about our future course of studies. That is when we got the news that another classmate of ours was getting married We were surprised and tried to talk to this girl. But her parents did not let us meet her. She was to get married the same evening We thought the wedding must be stopped anyhow as the girl was only 15 years old. We tried to convince her parents but they even refused to recognise us

We called up the police without telling our parents and the reply that we got is (verbatim) – 'A girl is getting married. Let her. What have we got to do? If you also want to get married, go ahead.' We rang up another police station and narrated the whole story. They said, 'We have another case to attend. Please forgive us.'

After losing hope of help from the police we called up a local newspaper although we were a bit scared. We told them about the wedding and also about the response of the police. They also said, 'We'll see,' and got rid of us.

We were helpless now. The girl got married in the evening and the *vidai* (send-off) took place the same night Our friends and brothers and sisters were making fun of us

We have come to the conclusion that all these laws are made to keep them enclosed in big fat books. Police, administration, progressive newspapers – all are frauds My reason for writing this to you is to tell you the truth

(To the editor: Chakmak is an open-minded, progressive magazine. We hope you will not be as inactive as the police and the administration and will publish this letter so that people learn from this true story.)

DIVYA AGRAWAL, 15 years,
Shivajinagar, Bhopal, M.P.
(July 1991)

Social beliefs, faith and superstitions: Eklavya has played an active role in the People's Science Movement and has tried to place science within a broader social context Its Science Teaching Programme is an effort to discuss popular myths and beliefs related to specific chapters, say, about disease or malnutrition, or spontaneous regeneration of flies from cow dung (which they even test experimentally). Children have at times gone much beyond the curriculum in their pursuit to understand such issues (A. Rampal, 1992; 1994) However, in its endeavour to promote a 'scientific temper', Eklavya has consciously chosen not to adopt a distant or dismissive attitude towards people's faith, beliefs or superstitions, but has constantly raised questions and tried to locate different types of 'explanations' within specific socio-historical contexts.

Chakmak had run a column called 'Why . Why ... Why', during 1990-92, devoted to such questions asked by a character called Muniya, to elicit readers' responses about popular beliefs, taboos, rituals, or even common superstitions. For instance, to the query 'Why do many people pour water all around their *thaali* when they sit down to eat?' a number of interesting responses were published, and the readers asked to decide which they felt was most probable. These included. 7 who thought this was to ward off evil spirits, 48 who said this was a way to thank the earth and god for the food they had provided, 26 which thought this made the dust settle down before we served food on a plate placed on the ground, and 37 who suggested the water prevented insects from being attracted by the smell of food.

There have also been a number of articles and stories by children about various superstitions they have 'tested' and shown to be untrue, or about their having challenged or even exposed 'miracle men' who were trying to exploit people's faith One such is reproduced here:

Superstition. I was once playing in the village. Just then a crow came and pecked me on my head. My mother and grandmother became worried when I told them about it. When I asked them why, my mother got annoyed and said, 'Go and bathe quickly and give some alms to the brahmin.' I asked, 'What is the use of giving alms to the brahmin? Should I give them to the poor instead?' But she got even more annoyed.

I thought, 'Let me see what happens by not having a bath or donating alms.' I told my mother, 'You were worried for nothing. What happened to me?' She scolded me and said, 'Now you don't go out the house for 3-4 days.' I did not listen to her and roamed around outside. Nothing happened to me. I then told my mother, 'You worry for no reason All this is superstition.' But mother scolded me again.

BRIJKISHORE VARMA, Devli, Dewas,
M.P. (December 1992)

Communal Riots: After the communal riots in December 1992, there was a strong urge within the editorial team of Chakmak to bring out an issue to show how children looked at it, to what extent did the violence disturb them, what they made of it, what kind of varied reactions they had, whether they saw any links between political equations and the violence. We wanted to record their experiences and expressions.

Some of these children expressed subtle lack of faith or even anger towards the supposed restorers of law and order – the police. There were others who explicitly articulated how the presence of police caused constant fear and tension rather than a sense of security. Seeing the police beat people, whether guilty or not, also seems to have disturbed many. One young boy remembered how when their house was attacked and they were running for safety, they had to be doubly cautious; both from the attackers and from the gun-toting policeman wielding 'shoot at sight' powers. It will be worthwhile to note here that further studies on how children visualise and assess power structures, its use and misuse can be quite revealing about the development of their

understanding on such complex socio-political issues.

'I had been to write an exam that day so I came back home early. There was police in the next house. They had climbed on top of the third floor and they had guns to shoot anybody they saw. There were shoot at sight orders At that time our house was attacked from behind. Everybody had spades and axes. After the wall was damaged, about ten people came in and set everything on fire. Quietly, hiding from the police, we ran away to our neighbour's house

SHADAB, class 6, Mahamai Ka Bag, Bhopal. (February, 1993)

This is not taught in our schools
As we all saw the dark night of 6 December 1992, people were taken over by some *banavati bhoot* (made-up ghost). When I got up after studying till midnight, I could hear some voices outside My elder brother peeped out and saw some people looting the shops in front of our house. When this did not satisfy them, they set fire to the shops. I was shocked to see this

Was all this that happened right? Our class, our school was never taught these things. Whoever teaches this must be a fool

SHYAM RATHORE, class 9, Sultania Road, Bhopal (February, 1993)

The Bhopal gas tragedy: When the world's worst industrial disaster occurred in Bhopal on the night of 2-3 December 1984, tens of thousands of residents of the city – men and women, young and old, were either killed or left maimed for life. Chakmak came into being the following year in July 1985. Soon after the tragedy there was so much to be done with the adult victims that not much except a few camps and workshops could be arranged with the children. These were organised by many groups working in and outside Bhopal. At these workshops, children mostly drew and sometimes narrated their experiences.

Later, in the sixth issue of Chakmak (December 1985, a year after the disaster), some expressions about the tragedy were published. Among these was a small verse by a class 11 student of Anuppur, Aman (now a sensitive journalist) It is a revelation to learn that not only is the young writer sensitive to the personal loss of friends caused by such disasters but that he can also see the tragedy as a result of state negligence. The gas tragedy occurred soon after the communal riots, after Indira Gandhi's assassination. In the last few lines, Aman draws an analogy between the gas disaster, communal riots, firing and so on, and underlines the fact that though these incidents should be controlled by the state, they seldom are.

In 1994, we went back to the gas-affected *bastis* ten years, later. The children who were 3 to 9 years old when the gas had leaked were now in their teens. They probably did not remember the incidents of that fateful night but have lived through constant illnesses, tensions and troubles.

In this section we will traverse through both the instant, impromptu responses by children after the gas leak had left its mark of death on the city, and the reactions of those children who have only heard of the tragedy from their elders but have experienced the after-effects themselves. Some of the older ones remember fleeing from a chaotic city and some of the sights they saw have left a permanent mark on their sensitive souls. Many children have expressed anguish over the ailments they suffered and still face each day. They are angry about the lack of medical and health facilities available to them, the ailments borne congenitally by the newborn, and are both ashamed and furious that the factory has not been closed down. Some of these children seem to have clearly seen the co-relation between the negligence causing the disaster and the greed for large profits. They probably see and subtly indicate an obnoxious link between the company and the state that stops the state (ministers) from closing it down.

This link reflects a perceptive political understanding which few adults, who have not personally experienced or witnessed the disaster and its historical backdrop, are able to reach. No doubt a keen young mind can not only go deeper than many of us; but is also honest and untarnished to be able to express it openly. To start with an edited version of an initial reaction of a 16-17 year old to the order of the day.

Kaun jaanta tha? (Who knew?)
A little body of a dead child wrapped in blood-sod tatters,
Whether he died in the riots or the gas, who knows?
Neither is his mother here nor his father,
What caste is he, who knows?
He was lost in his dreams when he slept last night,
This would be the last night, who knew?
His friend had promised to meet him tomorrow,
Those would be the last words, who knew?
They say ours is a free nation
But who knew we would get only bullets?
Who knew we would get only lathis (batons)?
And who knew we would get only gas?

AMAN KUMAR SINGH, class 11, Anuppur, M.P. (December 1985)

Today, when talking about the incident, children who were too young then to observe the details recall a collage of confusion, commotion, chaos and cold.

'I was only 8 or 9 at that time. The gas leak was the first *haadsa* (tragic incident) of my life. Never seen before or understood. There was only fear in my mind. Nothing was clear – what to do, where to go, what would happen next? When we were running, we feared how we would return home, whether we would return at all. Was this haadsa happening only in Bhopal or was this a scary storm spread all over the world? My young mind buzzed with various questions Running on with strange thoughts. Winter, numb hands and feet. No shawl or warm clothes. Only a fear and fear.'

FARHANA MASOOD, 18 years, Qazi Camp, Bhopal, M.P. (December 1995)

'When the gas had leaked in Bhopal we had tearful eyes, cough and nausea. Now after so many years we are still ill with headaches, paining and tired eyes and many other things. Today even very young children have to wear glasses. It is

a matter of shame and sorrow for our city that the company is still running and doing what it wants to with ease If I were a minister I would close it down first '

VEENA SHARMA, Gujarpura, Bhopal, M.P (December 1995)

There is one young boy who wishes he could personally get hold of the 'Union Carbide wala' He has questions to be answered

'When I think of all this only one question comes to my mind that I would ask the *Union Carbide wala* if I could get hold of him "Why did you have to set up this factory in my city? For your millions of profit, you have made millions of people's lives handicapped for ever" '

MOHD. YAKOOB, Qazi Camp, Bhopal, M P (December 1995)

'It was as if we saw a scene of *Qayamat* (the last day) when no one would belong to anyone Everywhere there would be *nafasa-nafasi* Neither would a father belong to his son, nor mother to her daughter, everyone will run for their lives. That is what we saw. There is an incident that I have not been able to forget till today – a woman left her daughter behind and got up on a truck. The child kept screaming 'Ammi-Ammi' with all her might There was a little girl whose frock had got caught in the hook of a truck She also kept calling for her mother '

GAZALA, Chataipura, Bhopal, M.P. (December 1995)

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My mind does not work, you see...

PRAMILA BALASUNDARAM

Voices of children crying in the dark
suffused with a sorrow, which untold
remains locked forever In small memories
but hurting Hurting and kept alive Alive through
dreams which seem to have no ending
Dreams for all time Secret Frightening
Listen
Can you hear the voices of these children?
Children, crying in the dark?

I SAID, 'I want to talk with you.' 'Why?' said Brijesh. 'I want to know what you think, what you feel, what ideas you have about many things,' I said. Brijesh smiled disbelievingly. Talk to *me*, he seemed to be asking No one wants to talk to me and when I do, they do not listen.

This was the reaction of almost all children in the day care centre in a resettlement colony in New Delhi. All these children are mentally retarded: some have associated orthopaedic and speech problems as well yet they are articulate in other ways. When they were told I wanted to talk to them to be able to write about them they were willing to give me their time. They were totally honest, having no need (or even the knowledge) of guile

Lal Singh is 20 years old. He is hydrocephalic, with mild spasticity and mild mental handicap. He talks lovingly of an older sister, now married and living elsewhere, and of his two younger brothers who go to school. 'A private school,' he specifies, not like the centre he attends 'Why, Lal Singh? Don't you like the centre?' He hastily assures me he does. 'But it is for people like me,' he clarifies. After an initial period of training, Lal Singh is now an assistant to the carpenter in the vocational training unit and has a monthly income. 'I contribute to the family income,' he says, his happiness apparent on his face. 'My mother buys the rations with my money.'

What about his father? Does he not contribute as well? He says his daddy works in a meat shop, cutting up chicken for customers. He pauses and then says, 'He comes home very late and leaves very early every single day ' Another pause. 'He can come home earlier if he wants but he stops to have a drink on the way home.' But almost immediately he absolves his father of all unspoken thoughts 'Sometimes,' he says smiling, 'he brings us some chicken to eat '

Before Lal Singh started at the day care centre, he went to a school for normal children. He did not like the experience. The other children used to tease him and push him and one day he broke his arm and had to go to the hospital for a long time. Everybody had many problems because of him

Lal Singh's ambition is to save enough money to buy himself some jeans and shoes Why doesn't he save the money he gets at the centre, we ask. The bank manager will not allow me to open an account, he says helplessly. But you can sign your name Lal Singh and you keep the accounts in the carpentry section, we remind him. He agrees but he is resigned to a situation where he may never be able to buy himself his own jeans or his shoes 'My mother cannot sign her name,' he explains 'and my father says it is better for me to give the money to my mother and not to put it in a bank.'

He also longs to play games like cricket or carrom with the other children in his neighbourhood. But the others do not want him because he cannot run fast enough and he takes time to play carrom. 'So what do you do, Lal Singh, when you go home after school?' 'I watch TV and I sit down until there is something to do.'

Brijesh had the same experience in a 'normal' school. His parents, who are better off than most of the residents of this area, sent him to a government school. 'But my mind does not work, you see, so my parents removed me from that school.' 'Who told you that, Brijesh?' 'The teacher in the government school,' he said simply 'My parents also say that.'

Brijesh, like Lal Singh, works in the vocational training unit in the centre and is good and meticulous at sand-papering and painting the wooden blocks that are made here. What he really wants to do is work with dyeing materials and make them as colourful as he can. He has done some work like this before and enjoyed the process of dipping *dupattas* in the water and seeing the bright colours come alive. He could not continue there, however, because his mother said he would get dark, standing in the sun the whole day, and then no one would marry him. What makes him very sad is being told to sit by himself at home when everyone is out.

Did he want to get married, I ask him. His answer is definite. 'As soon as my mother finds someone for me,' he says without a trace of coyness or embarrassment. 'How will you know who is the girl you want to marry?' I ask. He looks surprised, 'I will look at the photographs,' he says 'and say "Yes" to the one I like.'

I ask him one last question with some apprehension. 'What will you do when you are married?'

'I will take my wife to a hotel to eat. I will watch TV with her. I will take her out on picnics.' 'And,' I prompt. He looks puzzled. 'I don't like sitting alone at home,' he says. When I go home from the centre, my mother goes away because she has been working the whole day and I have been enjoying myself at the centre, and I have to stay at home by myself. It will be nice to have a wife,' he says wistfully.

Biru, a six year old with a bright smile, and ever ready to break out into song, is being brought up by his paternal aunt. His father died when he was about three and Biru has no recollection of him or know that he died of complications brought about by alcoholism. But, he says, that his *mausi* told him that he should never drink alcohol. He knows it comes in bottles.

He does have vague memories of his mother but is unfazed by the fact that he cannot remember much about her. Neither does he have any memories of what he did before he came to the centre. But the Home Intervention worker from the centre does. She knows Biru since he was a year old. He had been put on a Home Visit programme and had no speech and was not toilet-trained; nor could he walk. The reasons were obviously his peculiar family circumstances. Both his parents had died within a short period. This had overwhelmed the aunt who now found herself supporting two children, as well as working and keeping house for them. But Biru's coming to the centre had changed all this.

Biru has learnt to walk and talk and is also toilet-trained. Perhaps one residue of earlier trauma is his inability to control his appetite. *Alu-roti* is his favourite food. Even now, with an assured midday meal at the centre, his nightmare is that he may not get his share.

Renu would like to be a dancer. Ever since she won a prize at an inter-school competition, this has been her ambition. She is an enthusiastic participant of the drama therapy sessions. Renu, like other children at the centre who have attended a school for normal children, has unhappy memories of her time there. The teacher, she says, used to beat her often and more than she did the other children. They were not allowed out to play, like the boys were, in the afternoons. She does not remember anything that she learnt there, she says.

She does, however, remember what had been a major problem. The teacher used to ask the students to bring her things like toffees, fizzy drinks, and household things like soap, tamarind and so on. All the girls who attended the morning session had to do this. But her mother would not give her anything, so Renu got the blame. Do you think it was all right for your teacher to ask for things, I ask her. Renu smiles with the understanding of one who has faced needs herself. 'She wanted it,' she says simply.

What clearly comes through from talking to these children is that though they may be mentally retarded, they also have their ambitions and feeling which respond to situations, attitudes and caring people. They are willing and happy to talk to us. Is there anyone listening?

Where fetters lie hidden

ANEETA DUTTA

BORNIBARI, a little village in Nalbari district, looks tranquil and sleepy during the late afternoon, like any part of Assam. It is a fishermen's village and the scheduled caste inhabitants depend upon fishing and the making of fishing nets for their livelihood. Houses are built in close proximity due to the shortage of land, while squalor and dirt surround each living area. A surprising feature of the village is that though children play around, girls between the ages of 8 and 14 are a rare sight.

In the poorer pockets of Assam, where primary education is still a dream and where life is hard, land scarce and families large, girls are sent away as maid-servants to urban areas at a tender age. Bornibari is only one such place. This is a common practice all over the state, and though it has been the subject of many discussions, films, stories and plays, the situation even today is unchanged.

The urban lower and upper middle class show a preference for little girls, but once a maid attains puberty she is usually sent back to her village as her master and mistress do not want to be responsible for her future even though she forgoes a childhood of innocence and laughter for the family concerned. The little maid is responsible for the running of the house. And in addition to the manual jobs of a maid-servant, like cleaning and washing, she is entrusted with even the looking after of children, from babies to those who are almost the same age as her.

How does she spend her day? She is woken up early in the morning to complete the household tasks, after which she assists the mistress in cooking. She irons the children's uniforms, cleans their shoes and sees that they are neatly dressed for school. Breakfast dishes are piled up for her to wash, followed by work and more work. From entertaining the children to being a victim of their ire – she deals with it all: yet she is not allowed to complain.

As elsewhere in the country, child abuse is a common phenomenon in

Assam, and she is severely beaten and scolded if she fails to please the master and mistress Sometimes she is given the children's leftovers as food The sexual abuse of such children exists under the guise of respectability, and many cases go unreported

She watches the pampered children of the house and secretly envies their lot She can never hope to be like them and though she tries to emulate their ways, she knows that her future is different. She longs to go to school, but is deprived of the education that she rightfully deserves In some cases, her parents do not allow her to go to school even if the mistress of the house allows her to, for education is expensive and they are dependent on her paltry wages

Though she slogs from early morning till late night, what she receives as wages is a mere pittance. The middle class household may pay her anything from Rs. 25 to Rs. 100 per month Sometimes, what actually goes to her home is even less than this meagre amount. This happens when middlemen are involved in the deal. She has no holidays, no time off, and is allowed to go home once or twice a year for major festivals, such as Durga Puja of Bihu She may be treated to two or three dresses a year if she is lucky, else she has to clothe herself in rags, depending upon the whims and fancies of her 'owners'

She is an essential part of most Assamese houses, and grows up considering herself to be part of the only family she has known She gets emotionally attached to the members of the family, despite the harsh treatment that is meted out to her, but in most cases, once she attains puberty, she is unceremoniously packed off to her village. In the village, she finds it difficult to re-adjust to village life It is not easy to live with a family she has barely known. And she cannot eke out a livelihood for herself for she has not been trained in any vocation nor has she any savings despite having worked hard for years. She has to accept what is in store for her and waits silently till her parents can find her a groom

Nothing has been done to better the lot of child maid-servants in Assam, though the intelligentsia is well aware of the enormity of the problem There have been no laws, rules or scope for betterment and though this is definitely an example of child labour, people defend their stance by arguing that keeping a maidservant is helping a poor family feed one of its members. The truth is that the child is condemned to a life of slavery, and though the fetters may not be visible to the naked eye, they lie unseen.

Rehana and Rani are two young girls, destined to spend their childhood years in household drudgery, in a loveless atmosphere.

It was warm, even though it was almost mid-December. And there was a sense of jubilation for it was the last day of school, before the winter break began

Nine-year old Rehana was sitting silently, desperately trying to finish the answers to the questions scribbled on the blackboard There was determination written on her face because she had to prove to her parents that she could fare well at school. If she happened to fail in the examination, her parents would surely send her as *appi* (girl) to a rich man's house

How could she explain to them that this one-room structure that housed four classes was so important to her? That, though during the long rainy season, from April to October, the roof leaked and often wet her clothes and muddied her bare feet, it was her only hope for betterment. Sir had often told her that if she continued to work hard, she could become like 'Doctor babu' examining hundreds of patients every day

During the vacation, like other children from her village, she would work in the su*pari* factory. She would work for 12 hours a day for a daily wage of just 2 rupees A paltry sum, but enough to pay for a new dress when school re-opened. She would force Amma to take her to the Howly bazar and buy her a blue dress, with blue bangles that matched. And clips, if there was money.

But *Abba* was sick and suffering from tuberculosis. Money was owed to the *mahajan* and this time the small piece of land that they owned was leased out and they would receive only a fraction of the produce. Also, there was Ali *dada* who had told her parents of this rich household in Guwahati, where people wore fancy clothes and watched colour television.

Would she have to go there, after all?

Rani had worked as a maidservant in this house for the past two years. She had been brought to Guwahati from her little village in Dhulara at the tender age of eight and had to work from morning to night, as *Deuta* (Father) had promised a job to her brother in a government department.

In the past two years, she had learned to cook and tend to the children, and was an indispensable part of the household. Yet, if she spent any time watching television, *Aidew* (Mother) would yell at her and sometimes beat her. She remembered the time she thought Aidew was asleep and switched on the TV to watch her favourite programme. As soon as Aidew found out, all hell had broken loose.

Whenever Rani asked for new things, she was told that there was no money, yet, the family's two children always got what they wanted. Once she was so fascinated by the white party shoes that had been bought for Aimoni, that she could think of nothing else for days. It was just like the white pair that the beautiful girls on television wore and the desire to possess them obsessed her. At night, when the household was asleep, she quietly took them from the shelf and hid them under her clothes. Of course, she was caught and severely beaten till she had bruises all over her body. Her brother and mother were called from the village and told about her misdeed. Because of her naughtiness, she was not sent home for Durga Puja.

Today Rani does not steal, not because she is sorry for what she has done, but because she is scared of getting caught.

Homeless alone

KAVITHA K

'Life is like a moving train for us,
sometimes here, sometimes there,
But always ways from home'
— Abid Merthi

IT IS four in the morning. Eight year old Reshma, living on the pavements of Mumbai's Wadi Bunder, opens her eyes tiredly, her ears resounding with her mother's incessant cries telling her to wake up. While the world continues to sleep, Reshma and other girls in her neighbourhood scurry along to work. They work as fish-cleaners in the nearby docks. The cuts in her hand are mute testament of the hazards of such a job. The scales she cleans off the fish hurt her little hands, making them look like those of a much older person.

The time is now 10.30 a.m. A rather normal day at Bombay Central station. Porters hang around in small groups, smoking *bidis* and catching up on each other's lives. A few small children are also around. One of them is 9 year old Aslam. His home – Platform No. 7, Bombay Central station, Mumbai He belongs to Maharashtra but some of his friends come from as far away as Calcutta or even villages in the interior of Karnataka. Choosing to move away from the homes of their birth, asserting their choice to live on their own terms, these are children who have faced acute poverty and deprivation, alcoholic fathers and broken homes.

Just before the arrival of the prestigious Rajdhani Express, a few Railway Protection Force (RPF) constables arrive and start prodding Aslam with their batons. No reasons are given for the torrent of abuse and blows that follow. They haul him up by the collar. Almost 14 of Aslam's friends are similarly treated, taken to the RPF office and questioned about a series of robberies that have taken place. But not being responsible for the robberies, nor having any clue about them, Aslam has no answers.

This angers the constables even more who beat Aslam first with belts and then with cable wires. He is then made to do 150 sit-ups. If he stops because it hurts so much, he is beaten on his back with a belt. He is then told to slap his friend Munna, whom he thinks of as his brother – the two share their clothes and food. Aslam just cannot do it. The constables start beating him again, laughing sadistically from time to time. Aslam is then told to hold his ears by squatting and putting his hands under his legs and remain in that position for minutes on end.

This goes on for almost two hours. After being warned not to speak about the incident and not to remain at the station, Aslam and his friends are released.

The next day Aslam can barely walk. His back, legs and thighs ache unbearably but there is little he can do. He

fails to understand why the constables to whom he regularly paid *hafta* have been so cruel. Of the Rs 30 that he earns on an average every day by collecting and selling the bottles passengers leave behind on the train, almost Rs. 10 goes off in paying various middlemen, like the police and the local don. The rest he spends on movies and food

Moving from his village to a small town and then to Mumbai, Aslam is one of the 50,000 to 60,000 children living in the streets, alleys and railway platforms of Mumbai They take shelter on footpaths, under overhead bridges and on railway platforms. For them, 'home' is the village or town they have left behind, the city only a hostile place they have come to eke out a living. The boys work as gutter repairers, sewer cleaners, newspaper hawkers, wedding helpers, rag-pickers and shoeshine boys. The girls work as rag-pickers, scrap collectors, vendors. For contributing to the city's economy, they receive in return not love or security or dignity but foul verbal and physical abuse. Girls are regularly molested and raped and fall into the hands of pimps/brothel owners or male street gangs who force them into prostitution. Boys have to fend off advances from older peers To the public, street children are pickpockets, thieves and beggars. To the state, they are encroachers and vagrants To both, they are a nuisance. The scramble for survival, the construed 'illegality' of their place of stay, stints in remand institutions that resemble prisons in their functioning, leave them embittered and hardened. Like Abdul Rahim has been: 'What is better is to either kill others or to kill oneself,' he says cynically.

Street children must wait humiliatingly in queues outside mosques, restaurants and social clubs for food handouts. Alternatively, they may buy leftovers of 5-star hotels being sold cheap. In the words of a street child, 'I'd rather go hungry than eat food given away in charity.'

Civic amenities like latrines and bathing facilities are beyond the reach of street children. They do not have a change of clothes as there is no place to keep their belongings safe. Their unhygienic living conditions are responsible for a variety of ailments like colds, coughs, fever, skin diseases like scabies, as well at T.B. and malaria that street children commonly suffer from. Yet, illnesses are often suppressed by street children They dread visits to the hospital, whose labyrinthine complexity is matched by the derisive callousness of para-medics like ward boys. They are wary of doctors and nurses who they feel are indifferent to them. Their fears are borne out by what happened with Ashok Jadhav, who sustained bullet wounds while helping the police apprehend a thief. Treated as an ordinary patient in hospital, he was neglected both by the medical staff and police. His condition deteriorated and an operation came too late to save his life.

Smoking *ganja, bhang, charas* and inhaling toxic boot polish fumes is a way of life for many street children Private collectors of scrap and wastepaper pay street children in drugs and cash. Tea sellers ply drugs under the cover of darkness. A former addict wrote these lines: 'Come higher/sit beside me and smoke/ I have prepared a *chillum* for you/just buy a cigarette and see how many addicts flock around you/Then watch where we float....' If they are doomed to return to the streets, street children have no motivation to kick the habit. Detoxification is viable treatment only if followed by after-care.

Most street children are vulnerable to sexual abuse. Jobs available to girls are limited since employers consider hiring boys safer. But boys are preyed upon by peers. 14 year old Chikna's hair crawls with lice and his clothes are caked with dirt. This is to ward off older boys who prostitute themselves to rich young women in exchange for food, money and a glimpse of luxury. Their frustration at being exploited is taken out on younger boys like Chikna.

Street children often gamble away their earning because they have nowhere to keep it. Mehboob earns a whopping Rs. 100-150 per day for operating toy-cars. Half of it he returns as commission to the owners and the rest is wasted on gambling dens run by them. If anything remains, he prefers to spend it all, unwilling to keep it with *paan-wallahs* who charge exorbitant rates of interest. The saving habit could be inculcated in him by a bank at the shelter. A former resident of the shelter, who operates a tea-stall, stated: 'I would have been in a better position today if I had (saved) Now I am trying to save. I would like to be an ordinary, self-reliant person with my savings, not someone who has to depend on others and to keep looking for work.'

Naseem Khan laments, 'I know that the rights due to a child have been denied to me. We have a right to live in society with dignity. But society thinks we are dirty. I am 22 years old today and living like this, I cannot remember where I have lost my childhood.' A group of street children and youth, Ujala (Daylight), have articulated their demand for a shelter home – 'We began to feel that if all of us got together and raised our voice, we will be heard.' They joined hands with another group, Jagruti (Awakening) to set up a single organisation for street children and youth – Udaan (Flight). Members of Udaan sat on a hunger-fast to draw the attention of citizens and policy-makers to their homelessness. They suggested that unused spaces like those under overhead bridges, barracks and government schoolrooms that are vacant at night could be handed over as shelters for street children. The authorities have released some vacant spaces, but not directly to street youth. They have come with the proviso that NGOs should undertake to run them.

For a street child, a shelter should be viewed as immediate security, not a permanent residence. In Miraz's words, 'A traveller on the road of life/ I chanced upon a shelter that gave me love/ I stayed awhile but then moved on/ For I am a traveller on the road of life.'

For children should be, ultimately, not on the streets but in homes, with a sense of belonging and identity, with families, basking in warmth, love and a childhood.

Creating a new demonology

RAHUL

THE Roshanpura Chowk is the city centre of Bhopal and is situated just outside the boundary around the Vidhan Sabha where public assembly of any kind is prohibited. Consequently at any given time of the year, the sidewalks and traffic islands of this sprawling square are decorated with colourful *shamianas* and banners put up by sundry protest groups. So when the people from the Narmada Valley came in late November 1994 and set up their own tent for one of their long-drawn *dharnas* against the Sardar Sarovar dam, it should not normally have attracted the attention of the shopkeepers, passers-by and the residents of nearby flats.

That this particular dharna was going to be different, however, was immediately made known by a bunch of diminutive kids, dressed in clothes that were clearly handouts, who gathered enthusiastically around the microphone. They rendered in a sombre, melodious chorus what has come to be the signature song of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), '*Is liye rah sangharsh ki ham chune, zindagi aansoon se nahain na ho*' (We have chosen the path of struggle to ensure a life without tears). No sooner had the song ended than one of the small boys, eight year old Cheria, launched into a tirade against the government for its ill-conceived plan to displace him from his village for the sake of enriching people living in cities like Bhopal.

These boys are students of the Jeevan Shala, or life education school, being run by the NBA in Chimalkhedi, one of the villages which will be submerged by the Sardar Sarovar dam in Maharashtra. Since the dharna in Bhopal was to be a decisive one, a call had been given for all hands to come together. These boys and their teacher had decided to shift their school to Bhopal. Thus, in the middle of the hectic political activity related with the *Andolan*, there were these boys studying, painting, playing and occasionally taking over the mike to belt out stirring songs and speeches. The villages in the Vindhyas and Satpuras which flank the Narmada, peopled by various sub-communities of the Bhil tribe, are remote and unapproachable. As a result, these villages are devoid of the minimum amenities of modern development like roads, electricity, clean drinking water, health services and, above all, education The NBA, faced with the demand for education, first tried to pressurise the government into opening and running schools. But when no response was forthcoming, the NBA decided to run schools informally by itself. The school

in Chimalkhedi is one of the many such schools being run in the entire Narmada Valley area.

Cheria is among the liveliest of the lot of boys studying at the school in Chimalkhedi. 'The Bajariyas (non-tribals) cheat us because they can write and make white black. I want to learn the trick so I can stop them,' he says with a mischievous smile on his face. Earlier, he spent most of his time tending cattle. Now he not only has a rudimentary proficiency in the three R's, he has also built up a formidable repertoire of songs in Marathi and Hindi in addition to his own Bhili. He loves singing and is the lead vocalist of his group of boys. So much so, that on one occasion in a public meeting in Badwani, the nerve-centre of the NBA, he disregarded a burning fever that was racking his body to lead his group in a song. To appreciate the uniqueness of Cheria one has to ask oneself honestly how many eight year old boys in this country can critically analyse the government's anti-poor policies as he does in his impassioned public speeches.

Anjanwara village in Madhya Pradesh on the north bank of the Narmada had a Jeevan Shala for some time before it closed down as the teacher ran away! While the school was still functioning, the students undertook to map the resources and activities of the village collectively and produced a colourful map. Putu, one of the students, was enterprising enough to continue to learn and practise on his own. He has used his knowledge to set up a small provision shop. 'I do not make any profit apart from recovering my expenses but the people are spared the trouble of covering large distances to buy things,' he says. He is a sharp learner. When the solar lamp system was installed in Sadri village across the river, he spent weeks there with the mechanics. Later, when the people of Sadri opted to resettle on new lands provided by the government, Putu dismantled one of the solar lamp systems and brought it over to Anjanwara and installed it in front of his house all by himself. The system not only provides lighting but also recharges the lead-acid Kisan torches of the farmers in the village.

The first such experimental school was set up in Khodamba village in Madhya Pradesh in 1987. In its conception it was an ambitious venture. The medium of instruction was to be Bhili and the content of education was to be garnered from the immediate realities of a subsistence lifestyle cramped by the depredations of modern development. Thus all the primers had to be developed from scratch. The teacher and the students created these primers in a participative exercise. Local society, politics, history, geography, economics and biology were explored. The students also engaged in innovative cultural practices like staging plays in the weekly markets. Unfortunately, this school too has since closed down because once again the teacher ran away. Gania, one of the products of this school says, 'We became aware of the importance of our jungles which were being depleted by excessive exploitation as a result of a resource survey we conducted as students. This made the whole village collectively protect the forests which have regenerated profusely as a result.'

Politically, the most enterprising have been the children of Attha village. They have created a shadow village council like that of the elders. These children have renounced alcohol which Bhil children learn to drink as soon as they are weaned. They have raided the ration shop in their village a number of times to ensure its proper functioning. Parjam, one of the children, checked the muster rolls of labourers being maintained by the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA) staff supervising catchment treatment work and exposed certain irregularities. He was severely beaten up by criminal *goondas* at the behest of the NVDA staff before the elders could intervene. Nevertheless, he refuses to be cowed down. 'What use is my literacy if I do not challenge the malpractices of those who loot us in broad daylight?' he asks. Once again one can't help wondering how many products of government schools would ever dare to do what Parjam did.

The Jeevan Shalas have, however, failed to enrol girls in sufficient numbers. Bhil society being highly patriarchal, the education of girls is given a low value. In government schools scholarships are offered to entice girls into studying. In the Jeevan Shalas, on the other hand, the parents have to pay a nominal amount per child. Moreover, the content of education in the Jeevan Shalas, being subversive of oppressive structures, discourages men from sending their daughters to these schools. Thus a special effort needs to be made to get girls to enrol which is not being made even by the female activists of the NBA. The primacy of the struggle against the dam has caused the struggle against patriarchy to take a back seat.

All over the valley, in many villages, people and activists have together started schools. These schools have not been set up to prepare children for jobs in towns. The intention is to equip students with the skills necessary to tackle the modern market, administrative, political, and judicial systems which have so devastated their habitats and culture. Vania, the self taught *up-sarpanch* of Jhandana village in Madhya Pradesh, says emphatically 'The government schools teach our children to despise our lifestyle and our culture. The children grow up and either take up jobs in the towns or act as middlemen and facilitate the looting by non-tribal traders and government servants. We were once the kings of these hills and would like our children to regain the lost glory.' A sentiment that is echoed by the students of a residential Jeevan Shala in Gendra village when they sing: '*Chitu tara bangla sarkar hapki ledyo re kai bhai riyo*' (Chitu Patel of Sorwa village who was killed by the British and his fort converted into a police station. Your fort has been seized by the government, what are you waiting for?).

This is all very well but the problem is that this experiment in innovative pedagogy frequently breaks down. Many schools have closed down and others run intermittently. There are a variety of reasons for this inconsistency—funds are not available, activists have more pressing

organisational problems and teachers give up mid-way. This is the common weakness of all mass movements which try to initiate constructive programmes in tune with their ideologies. The tenuous nature of their existence in the face of state repression prevents them from conducting systematic constructive programmes. This, in turn, undermines their capacity to withstand the intellectual and developmental onslaught of the dominant forces in society and polity A Catch-22 situation that has seen even post-revolutionary societies succumbing to the profligate consumerism of the West.

The children remain undaunted by these problems They continue to play, fish, tend cattle and study if possible with gay abandon, not the least disturbed by the prospect of submergence that so worries their parents. Bhil children have to engage with the problems of life rather early and mature in their early teens as responsible householders. This has carried over to the sphere of struggle and so we have these children taking part in mass actions, often outnumbering the adults. Huma of Anjanwara village spent a week in jail charged for having tried to kill policemen; a laughable charge considering that he is only nine years old!

The struggle against the dam has set in motion a process of emancipation that has struck against the oppressive structures within Bhil society itself Nowhere is this more evident than in the broadening of the vision of the Bhil children Today, boys like Cheria are able to perceive the government and the World Bank as far more real and dangerous demons than the imaginary ones that their superstitious parents feared. Despite its tenuous nature, the Jeevan Shala experiment has carved out a space for itself in the pedagogy of the oppressed by creating this new demonology and the means to exorcise the new demons A conviction strengthened by the sight of children dancing around a log-fire in Bhitada singing '*Mota dakna che ye sirkaria na cheta karo re puria/Kayda kannon karo thapatin ne gofangola tiyar rakho re juwahiya*' (The government is a big devil, exorcise it children/Prepare your strategies and ready your slingshots, young men[1])

My life, my dreams

SUMITRA M GAUTAMA

THE Olcott Memorial High School serves 720 students, drawn primarily from the slums and tenements surrounding Adyar. Run by the Theosophical Society, it was set up in 1894 by Col. H.S. Olcott, one of the Founders of the Society, who began the school to create an opportunity for the *panchamas* (as Harijans were also then called) to be educated.

'My Life, My Dreams' was evolved to commemorate the school's centenary in December 1994. It was conceived of as a workshop of roughly 4 weeks for children in the two sections of Class 10. It was staged both in Tamil (for the schoolchildren) and in English (for the delegates of the convention and the visitors). Its script evolved out of the responses which approximately 90 children

gave to a long questionnaire that covered many aspects of reality as they experience it. This included a variety of subjects ranging from the locality they lived in, the number of people in their homes to their evaluation of academic and craft-based education; and whether they believe that traditional values and life style were good and needed to be preserved. They were also asked another set of questions about themselves Their answers were honest, sincere and revealing. It was a surprise how seriously these questions were taken There were many ingenious responses to the medley of questions put to them. What emerged was a brilliantly coloured, often poignant pot-pourri of attitudes to life and the future.

When faced with this variety, I had two choices –giving this whole picture a psycho-social structure and character and evolving a conventional play, or using all the responses to evolve a script that would reflect the picture – or as much as I could understand of it As such, the script which I wrote evolved into a 30-40 minute play-back monologue (with dances) which was in the form of an essentially androgynous voice which the protagonist(s) addressed to the audience. Before and behind these were cameos, tableaux and mime evolved to suit the situation or the perspective shared in the statement or communiqué. The attempt was also to offer students an opportunity not so much to give answers or offer solutions to examine their stances – but to look again

Some of the situations we looked at included the nature of the rural-urban divide. Questions were raised about its relevance and existence. In the discussion around these issues we discovered that there was a certain sentimental picture that these first generation learners held about village life, probably engendered by their textbooks There was, for instance, the myth of idyllic social connectedness: 'In villages everyone helps everyone else ' Feelings were divided about whether villagers are clean or dirty It is doubtful that any of the children seriously believed all the glowing things they were saying about villages in general. Many questions remained. How are villages different from cities, really? Or are they different at all? Yet why does almost everybody want to migrate to a city? Does one feel good in a city? There was also discussion on how to show this. It was felt that the script had uncovered a regrettable but necessary element of development today

Another interface we looked at was the distance between dream and reality, life and fantasy There was both the element of the horrific and the pathetic in what we uncovered. Beneath the veneer of modernity and the white collar lies an immense infrastructure peopled by shadowy brown figures in grubby clothes and stained hands, who make the yuppie vision real Then there is the world of delivery vans and lorries. The system which helps the city corporation to function – the sweepers, the keepers of the community bathrooms, the garbage removers – that all can criticise but none want to replace. It was difficult for the children to see themselves in infrastructural roles.

We then looked at what opportunities exist and how and why they do. There was much to see, identify with and assume 'The minds of men are the same, whether rich or poor, in a city or in a village. Yet there is so much variety.' The note of this query was, however, positive in effect: 'The world gives me opportunities today, to be and do many things, if I work hard and show initiative!'

But behind this brave front were many misgivings, doubts, scepticism and a sense of loss: 'Life is hard for everyone', 'There is a place for me in this world. Is this all I can ask for myself?'

We also talked of temptations, of the difficulty in loving truly, of being like Gandhi's monkeys and failing Some questions were thrown up, and became part of the script: 'Why is fun so expensive nowadays?' 'Is there no way of being good, doing good, and having fun?' 'My friend tries to be like the film actor Rajnikanth and gets into a lot of trouble with the girls.' 'My parents would kill me if I acted like film actress Meena or Roja, and yet we all watch TV together.'

Where we ended was with a question I found myself sharing –'I don't know what is the right thing for me to do. There are many voices within me.'

There were speculations we rested with, and found meaningful to enact – 'If money can solve all problems, why is it that so many rich people are also unhappy?' 'If education is the answer to all ills, why is the world in such a mess today?' 'What is it I truly want?'

All the action for the monologue were evolved with the participants. There was a sense of loss of valuable space when we ended. But the experience was truly enriching and enlightening for all involved It was reassuring to note that the ghetto culture hadn't yet arrived: but for how long? The most amazing aspect of the answers was the number of children who felt that money would corrupt, and that they were happy to make do and be content with what they had. Another inheritance of a not-so-long-back village life is that all students stated that they would prefer to live in a joint family after they were married.

Where tradition was concerned, many felt they would not like to go back to the earlier way of life in the village, or even in their lives in the city. Yet while traditional mores are slowly losing their hold for want of a live context, there is a deep value placed by patterns of thinking being preserved. One boy I talked to about dowry felt that his parents would certainly demand a dowry for him, and that he would not object because he had 'paid a dowry for his elder sisters, and the money had to be made up'. The girls in the group around me tittered. Then one of them spoke up and asked if he felt that it was a good thing. He said that he did not like it, but 'one had to go on'.

This dichotomy shows up prominently where attitudes to society are concerned. Metaphors of need, help and turning to a larger communal body continue strongly, however fragmented that body may be. There was a strong sense of 'creating a good impression' in soci-

ety, and the larger social body was seen as an important consideration in deciding what one would do and aspire for. There was, however, a sense of autonomy from one's parents – the student, by and large, felt that he/she would listen to what the parents had to say on important issues, but could decide small issues on his/her own

There was a sense of deep disillusionment with the political scene. They felt that politicians were only interested in feathering their own nests. But the myth of the ideal politician remains, linked primarily to films. No attempt is made to question or to break the myth In fact, it is nurtured rather tenderly and most often, honestly. The film hero, (in this case, Rajnikanth) who was overwhelmingly popular as a hero, was cited to be a good actor, portraying roles that valued the poor, and to have 'style' The heroine was liked for her beauty and for her support to the hero's values

The divide between the rich and poor is never stronger than in the student's response to films – the hero is seen as sympathetic, understanding and experienced in the pangs of poverty He is valued as he has the common ear, not because he brings out inner dilemmas This sympathy is essential as it brings home to the students in a poor urban milieu, living in concrete houses built in tiny plots or large beehives of tiny flats, or in clumped up thatched and tin roofed tenements by a dirty river, with no facilities for water or sanitation or bathrooms, that dreams are worthwhile Also that the rich diet of urban middle class progressiveness in ads and the media and the insecurities it throws up for the urban poor can be combatted most often by external action

The parents of these children are primarily from the working class – their fathers are cycle repairers, fishermen and sometimes clerks. Their mothers 'do' middle class and rich houses There is a sense of pragmatism about the three-language formula – 'it is necessary', 'it is a good thing, you need it', reservations are 'good' Since most of these children are first-generation learners, and their parents have either sold land and migrated to the city, or left small patches of land with relatives in the village, there is no example to go by. Academics are thought of, universally, as more important than the encouragement of arts and crafts in themselves or their communities. Nobody has, or is even considering the continuation of any craft that he or she might know.

There is, however, value placed on plumbing, typewriting, book-binding, mechanics, tailoring, carpentry, continuing repair work, learning at a polytechnic, and there is a gleam in the eyes when computers are mentioned Break-dance is extremely popular and keeps the community alive and active. Semi-classical and film music are played to create a sense of a common communal feeling: particularly during festivals, to which a whole slum or tenement contributes. There is artificial lighting with hundreds of figures made out of tiny bulbs and loud music. Some of the boys in class are considered excellent for 'dancing', some sell flowers and others paper-craft (umbrellas for Ganesha during Ganesh Chaturthi) during festivals Girls are taught *kolam* – traditional patterns made with powder, and learn to cook very early. Both boys and girls help in the house-work, though girls also speak of 'pressures' of various kinds. One girl got engaged through the process of this play. While some children are brought up by grandparents, uncles, aunts or single parents, the majority come from joint families and have a deep and abiding attachment to their mothers. All the boys spoke of looking after their parents and living in a joint family, and so did the girls, although differently

The girls primarily wanted to be nurses, set up small tailoring units at home or find government jobs. Some spoke of becoming MLAs or 'big' officers – often positions of social power – amidst catcalls from the boys and tittering among the girls; some spoke of becoming doctors. All expressed the need to be socially useful. Some spoke of becoming housewives and saw no point in continuing education beyond the 10th. Many of them spoke about finding husbands who would value family and not create 'issues' in the house; who would be in a secure job and who would understand them – in that order.

There was no premium placed on afforestation, while there was a vague sense of trees being 'good'. There was a wistful desire for clean roads and sanitation but that did not extend to any wish to go back to the village, where the air is clean, and it is possible to have space. Their own campus, however, located in the spacious and green Theosophical Society grounds filled them with pride and a sense of belonging. When asked why quarrels arise down the road, they said it was mostly over water and rubbish dumps. They felt incapable of doing anything about this, except in a general sense. The pressures of urban living did not weigh heavily upon them at all – in fact, it seemed to fill them with a sense of challenge and adventure and the possibility of convenience and pleasure, a fact oddly at variance with their largely fatalistic attitude to money.

The Olcott Memorial High School is also exceptional in that it has a good craft section and that it is co-educational. There is a volatile relationship between the boys and girls, with cultural mores warring constantly during friendly and not so-friendly human interaction. On more than one occasion, I had to go on my moped to the houses of various girls to reassure their parents that coming for practice on Saturday mornings was all right, that I would be there and the girl had not arranged a tryst. In each case the girl was dressed and ready but was being restrained at home despite letters sent earlier. On all occasions, however, I was greeted with effusive hospitality, offered the best seat in the house and on some occasions given a cold drink.

Teacher *amma* was viewed with a mixture of misgiving and anxiety about the student's welfare, the play was secondary. I was asked about the student's proficiency in English (I was taking English classes, too) and was told how lazy the girl was. The atmosphere, while being equally repressive in the odd home

which had no son in the house, showed a greater freedom for the girl to pursue her higher studies and further her prospects. The girl experienced greater autonomy as a result and had more independent views. The boys too found it difficult to come for rehearsals on holidays as many of them were apprentices in their father's or brother's repair shops, milkmen or newspaper boys or vendors. Some helped their fathers run mobile ironing units.

Here are some of the more interesting responses I received to the questions I asked:

'Politics is the doll that some people play with.'

'I will not be happy with moving backwards in time. I think that to follow traditional mores is good.'

'The state that the country is in today, we require academic education, not craft-oriented education.'

'If you have a lot of money, you also have worries and fear. If you have less, you are happier.'

'I think schools are important because they remove the barriers between the rich and the poor.'

'Girls should not be locked up at home.'

'Rajini is a straightforward actor who understands the poor. Khushboo acts as his wife and treats the poor with love. That's why I like their films.'

'I would like to be seen as a good man who shares his wealth with the needy.'

'If I can't get a government job I might start a small business.'

'Money comes and goes. You can't keep it.'

'Money is like a ghost, a spirit which haunts you and makes you always feel you never have enough.'

'Women are trapped in the market place of marriage.'

'Women are imprisoned by society but they don't seem to mind at all.'

'I'll tell you how society progresses. Through bribes. People think if they buy something that people have in other countries they have progressed. So they don't mind how they make the money to buy that thing. That's society for you.'

'You need a caste certificate even to put a child in school today and to obtain it at the government office you have to pay the clerk some money. I hate politics.'

'To be happy, you need to study.'

'I like Arjun's (film actor) acting because I feel when I look at him that's how I would react!'

'Society has been created so that people can help each other. But I wonder whether society really is that way.'

'My parents keep telling me life is like a boat, a river, and all that. But I am attached to it.'

'In my locality, people fight about a variety of things. Money, gossip, putting all kinds of things in the rubbish dump, washing clothes on the road, etc.'

'I have a loving mother, a father who will fulfil my every wish. We are four sisters – I have two loving and beautiful elder sisters, and a younger sister who respects me. We might not be rich, but we are happy. My father has a mobile ironing unit. I want to take my IAS exam.'

'This is a time when schools are widening the minds of the poor.'

'I don't like co-education. The thoughts of men are one way, the thoughts of women another.'

'Among the boys I like Satish best. He knows what to say at what time and he talks to all the girls as well as he talks to me.'

'I think my education will surely help me get a good job.'

'Villagers don't know much. They don't boil their water before they drink it.'

This is a random sample. There are many other interesting, thought provoking, touching responses. Not all answers have been covered – for instance, the responses to 'What in you opinion will make you happy?' or 'What would you look for in a friend?' much more can be done. Yet the value of this exercise has been to shed light for all (primarily, the children themselves) on the pulse of working class urban life and its creative energy

Is Michael Jackson god?

NAMITA UNNIKRISHNAN

TODAY, children in India are besieged by changing, sometimes very unfamiliar, images, faces and scenarios which are projected by the small screen right into their homes. Television is altering their lives and their perceptions of themselves and of other people's realities The messages conveyed by this audio visual tapestry are ubiquitous, yet defiantly persuasive. They are not only setting a consumption agenda for children but are also providing a whole range of behavioural and aspirational clues which children are quick to assimilate (however contradictory these might be to their own economic and social norms).

To understand television and delineate the dominant metaphors it is introducing to its viewers, and particularly to children who form the most vulnerable and impressionable section of the TV audience is a complex task. According to the findings of our study on the impact of television and television advertising on children, this complexity has everything to do with the differing realities of children from varying socio-economic backgrounds.

In negotiating television information and the apparently harmless 'entertainment' which is on offer around the clock, children bring into play their own experiences. Thus a child from a slum to whom the world of television seems comprised largely of people and events which she cannot easily identify with, will react differently from the child who has grown into an open world with multi-optioned soures of information This latter child, with greater and longer exposure to the medium and a better understanding of the way in which the medium operates, is undoubtedly advantaged, but equally at risk as television offers every child behavioural and other prescriptions for success, love, beauty, power and even popularity.

Our study suggests that television is laying down a new set of norms for all of society irrespective of their cultural or economic distinctions. In that respect, it is faithfully playing the role of a unifier: offering the same fare to all viewers

[1]This article is based on *Impact of Television Advertising on Children* by Namita Unnikrishnan and Shailaja Bajpai Sage, 1996

without discrimination. However, when that common fare is seen through the eyes of Indian children it becomes apparent that its subtle and gross impact serves to oppress some and elate others.

Take the instance of a young girl from a *basti* in Delhi who enjoyed her own sparkling performance as she rattled off the names of products, especially cosmetics, that she recalled having seen on television When she began to discuss various aspects of television her excitement was tinged with an underlying apprehension She felt that most of the people who appeared on television (mainly in TV ads) were 'different and hard to identify with'. Her efforts to explain this comment suggested that the Indian in television advertising was, to her, unreal and alien and very unlike her and other members of her family. The culture of television was imposing on her a whole new worldview at variance with her own.

A reading of studies conducted in the West brings us to the remarkable realisation that we are doing to ourselves what the white American has done to the non-whites. As one such study notes, 'Television creates two worlds – one White, the other non-White.... White children learn from television that it is a White world . .' It goes on to discuss how Whites (especially men) occupy the dominant, high powered, professional positions while the Blacks and other non-Whites tend to be pushed into less desirable roles.

Within the audience this role depiction teaches the young of both groups (the Whites and the non-Whites) that they are irrevocably stuck with an image and a status. They grow up with this idea and acquire as they go along more clues about the nature of their racial destiny Feelings of arrogance or, alternatively, low self-esteem are aroused by constantly viewing oneself either in a position of success and authority, or vulnerability, as the case might be.

The basti child talking of the alien Indian on television represents much the same phenomenon The reverse end of her observation implies that in many ways the vast majority of the Indian population feel excluded from the text of television. Frightened by the changing, unrecognisable world portrayed by television, parents, particularly those who are themselves illiterate, are abdicating to the power of the medium: to teach, to instruct, and to mould. The parents said they felt incapable of preparing their children as they themselves did not know or understand that world. At least by watching TV their children might grow up aware of the codes that are becoming important to society For the child, then, the message is learn the values, attitudes and priorities of modern India from television if you want to stay afloat. If the dominant images on television seem to be saying that the India worth associating with is comprised of essentially westernised, well-to-do, fashionable or filmi people, then so be it.

This brings us to what children are learning from television. As never before, Indian children are growing up into an increasingly 'TV informed' world. They are relying more and more heavily upon television both as a primary source of inexpensive and continuous entertainment and as a vital conduit for information. Many children, especially in the slum and other less economically well-off areas of the capital, see television as sacrosanct and relate to it with the same intensity as they would to a teacher. One young boy said, 'I love TV because it shows us how to live our lives'! It is, of course, even better than the teacher as it allows them a passivity and is undemanding.

In keeping with advertising priorities on television (mainly dominated by a handful of consumer durables such as soaps, toiletries, personal care products and foodstuff including cold drinks), children recognise that socially these are today's symbols of success. Every day thousands of times over children are exhorted to buy, buy and buy. Messages and advertising promises are implanted in their memories so much so that a large number of them popped up with an articulated desire to put a beverage like coffee on their own personal list of future comsumption items. Coffee, it was clear, had made its mark on their impressionable minds, as the drink of the upwardly mobile youth and they wanted to stay in that line.

A large number of the often advertised consumer non-durables are affordable at least on a one-time purchase basis (unlike the more expensive durables such as TV sets, music systems or refrigerators) and children, we found, are acting as antennas acutely tuned into the new offers on the market. They inform their parents of attractive discounts, new soaps, premiums and promises made by advertisers: their information coming principally off the small screen.

Many of the children interviewed by us are fulfilling advertising prophesies, intents and hopes by parrotting TV ads and actively campaigning at home for a product such as the Le Sancy soap, until their parents give in.

As for their own priorities, children are far from immune to the consumer code spelt out persuasively by TV advertising with sanction and support from entertainment programmes. A young boy from a joint, middle class family in old Delhi rated a sophisticated appearance as very important for any level of future success. He had already determined that he would dress in clothes from 'Harry's collection'. Another young boy wanted a bow tie and a third, a zap watch right away. This heightened awareness of the need to look good was reflected by children in almost direct proportion to TV advertising's stress on it. When it came to items of immediate gratification, sports shoes of the Reebok and Nike kind had successfully made the well-heeled child feel that these would add speed to their performance at a school sports competition.

Other children were hungering for a Barbie doll or, if they already had one, for the entire collection. In some cases the yearning lasted well into their teens, when the 'doll stage' is said to be over. The compulsion came from their feeling that they would miss out on an important part of the childhood dream if they could not

own the vinyl model of the perfect (American) woman

In the Indian context, this rise of consumer aspiration/individual gratification over and above all else, is placed against a backdrop of extreme inequalities While it was perfectly understandable and touching to hear a young boy talk wistfully about washing machines that would ease his mother's burden, it was equally strange to find that owning a television set had taken priority over a long list of basics including decent housing, safe drinking water and education At one end of the spectrum you could meet a child who said that he would, if he had a few rupees of his own to spend, buy an orange because he had never tasted one, while at the other there were children who wanted Rs 1000 and more as monthly pocket money. Meanwhile TV was luring all of them towards the big buys and instilling in them the notion that they had to become good, healthy future consumers to be acceptable to the changing social scenario

Reality and desire appear to be melting one into the other without firm anchor or rooting. To read television text or understand its sophisticated nuances as it flows from commercials to programmes; jumps time-frames, zooms over or into a multi-charactered story line and plays with visual fantasia, requires a certain level of visual literacy Children, although currently exposed much earlier and more intensely to the medium, are not all equally comfortable or aware of the way in which television operates and how programmes are made. To many of them the camera is honest and everything it depicts is a slice of reality, with the exception of the story-based entertainment programmes. During the study many children in the 5-8 age group and some older ones who did not have the benefit of belonging to a learning environment, failed to even distinguish between programmes and commercials. In cases where the parent is also unable to see through television, as it were, the result can be astounding

A young woman, working as a household help, was recently discussing the merits of Michael Jackson versus his Indian counterpart, Prabhu Deva. She had been watching the two well known dancer/musicians who appear regularly on television, with studied interest Prabhu Deva, who has come to be regarded as India's answer to Michael Jackson, was not, she felt, quite in the same league as the mega star His failing, according to her, was that unlike Michael Jackson, he could not 'change his physical form at will'. (*Woh apna roop nahin badal sakta hai*) Michael Jackson, on the other hand, could quite easily take on many persona and was touched with magic, she said

For most urban children with access to television sets, Michael Jackson is a household name and a symbol of the new cultural priority being established in their minds. This young woman's comments were intriguing. Clearly her belief system was still firmly entrenched in the mythical and folklore tradition which commonly acknowledges the appearance and reappearance of gods and goddesses in forms other than those commonly associated with them

The young woman in question was bewitched by a Michael Jackson music TV video in which he mysteriously casts his magic The result: dismembered elephant teeth are rejoined to the animal's tough hide, and uprooted trees stand tall once again. Visually, the images left her awestruck, a state that is reinforced by centuries old beliefs that such miraculous feats are the work of the gods. This vision was untainted by the more cynical approach that modern day viewers who are visually literate may have To them the presentations in such television dramatics are the combined work of ingenious minds and computer graphics.

Is Michael Jackson a modern-day god? If the young woman's 7-year-old son were to ask her she would probably give him enough reason to believe so. Mother and son would remain content in the wonder of this belief until somehow it became known that TV visuals are not always a direct representation of reality

Out of the mouths of babes

JASMEETA

'MUST we always work first and later play?
Why can't we play first and then work?'

As a social activist, I visited a village continuously for eight months and began an informal education centre there My stay in the *basti* made me realise that children in the village work even as they play. They take their goats and sheep to the fields and while the animals graze, they splash about in the Yamuna, catch fish, forage for *singhadas* (water-chestnuts) or *bhuttas* (corn cobs). In small groups, they hunt for mice or bird eggs and play hide and seek, while keeping an eye on their grazing herds. They play *stapu* and *guti* in the same way as someone smokes a *bidi* at a bus-stop. If they find any piece of wood while collecting cow-dung, they make bows and arrows. They play with old tyres, torn plastic slippers – whatever they can find.

For a while, I reflected on this discovery. Since I wanted to go beyond a framework of walls and rules for them to follow, I decided the best way to do

this was to rub out the divisions between play and work, like they did. So I abandoned myself to singing, dancing, laughing and playing with them. I soon learnt that these children already had a world of play and work wherein there was a realisation of freedom, a participation in learning, a recognition of nature and of struggle, skill in their hands, enthusiasm for discoveries and music in their ears – what was there left for me to teach?

Intrigued by my presence, they used to gather around me, one by one. The children began to assemble and even began taking their attendance on their own. It was thus unnecessary to ask parents for permission. Nor was there any need to implement time-tables or enforce attendance Seeking new ways for a new age, we composed a poem which reflected some of our methods and principles:

We will make 'our school' with love
We will come exactly as we like.
After work we will wait
If we like, quietly we will leave.

We will teach all
How to read and write.
We will sing and dance
And become wise

Guddi came late to school one day. After that, she came late everyday, often getting up to leave while a class was going on. I knew that 7-year old Guddi carried on two tasks at one time: she attended her class *and* looked after her cow. How could she be punished for leaving class early? So I decided not to punish her nor anyone else and 'our' school and class carried on without punishment.

We deem it essential to scold and even beat children Teachers have traditionally used this method, believing that to spare the rod is to spoil the child. So what does one do when the teacher is offered the other end of the stick? One day, the children picked up a stick and asked me to keep it even though I did not need to use it, implying that the presence of the stick should never be forgotten This was one of the several lessons I learnt from them.

Another time I brought a doll and all the children crowded around me to play with it. In fact, they were so fond of it that they would follow me to the bus stop and see me off in order to spend more time with the doll. Naturally, I never discouraged them for this would happen with every new article I carried, whether a magnifying glass or a new book. Children surrounded me no sooner than I reached the village, snatched open my bag to see what was inside When they asked: '*Didi*, do you eat such vegetables?' I used the opportunity fo give them a lesson in hygiene. 'Why do you keep seeds in your bag? We have plenty of seeds,' was followed by a lesson in science, 'No, no, first we will hear a story from this book,' was followed by language lessons.

Their questions emerged from curiosity and developed into an awareness of different subjects. Thus, 'education' spilled over into all directions: after all, asking questions is the basis of all sciences, all synthesis. Never should such questions be discouraged for not only do they lead to thoughts about the home, family, society and the world around them, they also excorcise the fear of the uniform and the chair. It is everyone's right to ask questions and seek answers: but most of all it is the right of children.

One day, a fight erupted between two children. Although both were close to tears, they wouldn't stop. Somebody, in a panic, called me and all the children followed me out of the classroom. When I saw the fight I said, 'Hey, look how the two heroes are fighting! Give them a hand! But where is your loot, you heroes?' Suddenly, the fight became fun. Clapping and laughter followed: even the two fighting heroes finally started laughing and an ugly fight ended as a game.

But no two days are identical, nor does the same day ever come again. There was another fight and blood oozed out of Meena's face. There was chaos and the children began to blame each other. I also got worried. Then, quietly, I looked at the little girl. In that same silence I took her to the tap, washed her wounds, put some turmeric paste on the cuts and gave her my total attention. What was to be done next; who was to be punished? I noticed that the same heavy silence had gripped several children. They had realised that 'today' some unseen limit had been crossed. What more could I have wanted them to understand?

The same Meena who was beaten up that day was once responsible for my missing the bus. I had conducted a lesson using puppets and Meena was playing with a doll. My bus drove in but she did not return my doll. I thought for a moment of boarding the bus, leaving the doll with her. But that would have meant being unfair to the other children who had waited their turn. Should I then snatch the doll? No, that would not be fair either. Ultimately, I decided to take a later bus, even if I had to walk down to a nearby village to catch it. I asked Meena gently, 'Haven't you had your fill of the doll yet? Fine, I'll stay on for a little longer.' That not only won me a friend, it taught Meena a lesson as well.

Unlike her herd of sheep and goats who only understood the language of the stick, she could be made to understand without being prodded with a stick to obey. Meena, like the other children, would be naughty but handled sensitively, she could be made to see her mistakes.

Friendship and trust are sufficient grounds for framing rules. No other force is needed to enforce discipline. There is no need to ask children to sit in a row. They understand that if they get together, they can enjoy stories better and do their work more efficiently. Then they watch each other in a better way. They also need to be assured that everyone's turn will come if something is distributed: there is no need to push and jostle.

The children learn values necessary for collective living in the course of their everyday life. What more can they possibly learn in classrooms? Some experiences and habits gradually get strengthened over time. The games, stories, songs and experiences of the classroom form the base for memories which mould them effortlessly and unknowingly for life.

Comment:

Seeking a lost childhood

OUR understanding of children and childhood seems to be caught in a time warp For many of us, children – or so we nostalgically recollect – were a natural part of the landscape Their arrival was greeted with joy. They grew up without too much interference and someone (mainly the women in the extended family) took care of them, nurtured and socialised them, mothers and grandmothers told them tales, and as they grew up they went to school or to work. Memories of childhood were associated with happy abandon, climbing trees and stealing into the kitchen for 'out of bounds' goodies Fathers particularly, were part of the hazy backdrop. Life, in short, was glorious fun

Such a representation today would probably, and correctly, be dismissed as a description relating to a small minority amongst our population, fitting at best the world of the upper caste-class elite But even amongst other strata in our society, according to the anthropological studies popular in the fifties and early sixties on child rearing practices and the rites of passage, the adult perception of the child was not very different. Girls and boys were socialised differently, with the former being broken into housework at an early age. The poorer amongst us introduced their children to work, responsibility and sharing burdens early on. But children everywhere were treated with joy, regarded as pure and childhood seen as the golden age.

How would such a description be regarded today, not just by us, the adults, but by children themselves? Increasing urbanisation, pressure of work and individuation, the disintegration of extended family linkages and, above all, the 'planning of children' has led to a radically different perception about children and childhood, at least in our urban landscape. The joy in

the arrival of a child is now mixed with a new trepidation about how we will cope with the pressures of caring for and socialising the child, as well as the increasingly competitive and bleak future that the child is likely to face

Growing up today is a trauma Even if we dismiss Mira Nair's street children or Meera Dewan's working children as not being central to our cocooned concerns, they intrude in a fundamental way into our (and our children's) lives From the servant child in our homes to the beggar and the vagrant child on the street, there is no easy way we can escape the cruelty and violence that is part of the everyday living experience of most children And for anyone even remotely sensitive, there is no way to even sheepishly argue that such ugliness is part of a world that does not concern us.

Some of us, in our childhood days, enviously looked upon the working child as a Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn who (unlike us more disciplined ones) was free and even had some money All of this appears like a cruel joke today Just read the daily newspaper to learn about the reality of existence on the other side of the fence – the growing numbers of children not just working in miserable conditions – *dhabas*, construction sites, petty establishments and the like – but as beggars, vagrants, prostitutes, living on the edge of violent abuse and crime, drugs and death. For them there is no childhood.

But coming closer home, where survival and security are not even proximate concerns, is the story of our children and our relationship with them any better? True, our children do not lack the goodies of life – some (mostly obnoxious brats), in fact suffer from a surfeit of them – but the tension is palpable from an early age. From the tortured discussions on whether or not to have a child, the preparations associated with going through a pregnancy, trying to make sense of the dozens of theories seeking to mould child rearing, the frenzied search for elusive time between work and a dozen other preoccupations to spend 'quality' time with one's child, the search for crèches and pre-school institutions, all the way to seeking admission for your child in a reasonable school – how many of us look back at those years with any nostalgic joy? Many of us have had to painfully revise our understanding of the family, rework our relationships with parents and in-laws – all with the instrumental purpose of devising different ways to cope with the lack of time, money and institutional facilities for our children.

Schools, even the best ones, are often a nightmare Between spiralling costs, indifferent teachers, loads of homework and our desire to equip our child to cope with an increasingly competitive and hostile world – where is the space for joy and discovery associated with a happy childhood? If anything, with parents trying to off load the children on to the school and the school trying the reverse, the primary preoccupation of the adult vis-a-vis the child is order, how to minimise the nuisance value that children represent

Equally galling is the virtual absence of other accessible facilities to excite and stimulate the child. Toys, books, playgrounds and sports facilities, music and theatre, even the entertainment available over TV is either priced out of reach or is a third-rate copy of what our designers and planners have borrowed from the West. Between He-Man, Ninja Turtles and Barbie dolls as status symbols and the morally infested literature produced by the Children's Book Trust (CBT), why are we so surprised and hurt when our children prefer to play *gulli-danda* or hop-scotch in the streets?

The time has come to explore the contemporary world of the child, childhood and thinking and planning for children Though limited in its coverage to the urban landscape with a bias towards the middle class world, partly because attempts to encapsulate the bewildering range of environments and responses across the country – stratified by caste, class, gender, culture and region – are foredoomed to failure, the expectation is that such a focus will help us relate to a reality that is in the making. Providing glimpses of the child at work or play, at home and in the school, the influences he/she is exposed to, the interaction with the state, the unreported but growing incidence of child abuse and trauma – may help us to rework for ourselves newer, hopefully more meaningful frameworks of relating to and doing well by our children.

In particular, we must become concerned about the growing articulation about the 'rights of the child'. Are these to be essentially statements of intent or should they be justiciable? Should regulation, enforced by the state, cover the public spaces or should it extend into the household? How do we look upon the Nordic practice of informing and instructing the children their rights vis-a-vis their parents – a victory for humanity or the beginnings of an Orwellian nightmare?

These and other questions may appear both far-fetched and academic in a situation characterised by grinding scarcity and a struggle for survival, where every indicator from nutrition to schooling, access to cultural capital or leisure, is depressingly low for a majority of our children. But in a future increasingly globalised and urbanised, with individuation and atomisation clearly on the agenda, we can no longer take shelter behind nostalgic memories of our own childhood. The future will be different, only depressingly so, unless we can plan and act otherwise.

HARSH SETHI

Books

MATSYA by Shanta Rameshwar Rao. National Book Trust, Delhi.

GADBAD GHOTALA by Safdar Hashmi. Sahmat, Delhi.

GRANDMA'S ART: Children's Mahabharat by Santokba Dudhat. The author (in a cyclostyled format), Ahmedabad.

SEASONS OF SPLENDOUR: Tales, Myths and Legends of India by Madhur Jaffrey. Penguin, Delhi.

LANDSCAPES: Children's Voices edited by Gita Wolf. Tara Publishing, Madras.

EVERY generation confronts its own abilities to grasp and give tangible form to intangible ideas, moods, feelings in the light of its own worldview. Each parent does some form of self-questioning when called upon to communicate and pass on their beliefs to their children.

Their social and cultural environment directly influences the text of this communication, either as a critique or an affirmation of the environment. The process of communication itself is an act of arriving at understanding. Many find it most convenient to build black and white images and to portray semblance as static truth. And yet the narratives that have refused to die have been energized by a range of subtle nuances that have accrued with re-interpretations of the obvious. Static truths have the shortest lives and deep-rooted images, symbols of our many selves have been manipulated down the ages, which have left their own traces in the narrative through which social history is read.

Between the static and the manipulative there is another strain not always visible. This is the more inquiring and inquisitive voice which is often submerged by contemporary events. All the same, surviving in subterranean passages, it surfaces from time to time, impelled by a force which is difficult to identify.

Events in our own times have compelled us to take certain positions. How tenable these are is a matter for self-questioning. Before the 1984 riots and the Babri Masjid demolition, it was possible to believe in the dream of a hundred flowers blooming. However, today one is left painfully aware of the nature of alienation that has crept into our basic fabric.

It is in this context that I searched for an alternative force, what I would like to call the 'continuous narrative'. It is the re-assessing, re-locating, deeply interested and involved conscience, which seeks out continuities from within disjunctures. It is the voice that enables and empowers an active participation in the ongoing process of assimilation. Prismatic in nature, it is opposed to the appropriation of cut-outs of symbols, icons, thought processes by fascist forces.

There is a vacuum to be filled in our psyche – who is going to fill it? The perpetrators of a standardized, made to order worldview with powerful media and economic might to back them or an enhanced and more subtle self-awareness capable of tapping its own sources for enrichment of the soul, which is also capable of countering the encroachements into the self by the two dimensional images being passed off as cultural roots and ethnicity?

It was heartening therefore, to discover people whose writing and drawing for children reinforces this search for, and re-connection with, a deeper continuity. Many have worked through mythology, others through literary ideas and some through nonsense images. I must admit that such a search is severely handicapped by having access only to Hindi and English texts. There is probably more happening in the regional languages that unfortunately we are not in touch with.

Interestingly, all these books deal in one way or another with the complementary nature of contrariness. A

kind of ecological wholesomeness where Good and Bad or Right and Wrong are not mutually exclusive. Even if they are neatly aligned on two sides, a mirror-image still remains. The other common theme in these books is the contemporary eye. The authors look at stories and their import from a broad position of 'now' in terms of time, which makes them relevant to the child of today as well as to the child in the adult who tries to bridge the gap between an older world and the new one

The story of *Matsya* has combined in itself three sub-themes and has forged them into one stream of consciousness appraisal in the telling of the story. The sub-themes are taken from the Darwinian world where the big fish eats the little fish; the Matsya or fish avatar of Vishnu which saves the world from destruction; and that of Noah's Ark that is instrumental in the preservation of species.

Matsya is a small and beautiful fish who somehow manages to escape the big ones, lands at the feet of a human being and begs protection. The human family safely sees the fish into adulthood and finally releases him into the ocean. Matsya forewarns them of an impending deluge and advises them to build a boat that could ride the rough waters till they subside The family spreads the message but no one believes them. The deluge takes the world by surprise, but the family gives refuge to as many species as possible. Matsya emerges from the water and guides the family and all living beings to a small island with the help of a strong rope tied to its horn. He then disappears back into the vast ocean.

Shanta Rameshwar Rao has succeeded in retaining the mythic gravity of the story while imparting to it the lightness of fantasy. She has firmly gripped the rootedness of the tale in our psyche and allowed it to flow outwards into our present Such inventiveness is the real need of our times to interpret and, above all, to deeply personalize cultural icons that have become distant and therefore uncomfortable and unapproachable. Neglect, or sometimes a more active disdain on the part of the alienated, has resulted in drying up the emotional lifeline of these icons. Consequently the ability to re-interpret, re-localize or vitalize the images in contemporary experience, is also incapacitated

Gadbad Ghotala, on the other hand, is a delightful jumble of words and intentions where everything does what it shouldn't and more relevantly what is its opposite function. In the best tradition of the nonsensical, Safdar takes us through delightful chaos and then simply turns it around to normalcy The language is genuine and everyday, the feelings are impish and full of fun and delightfully free of adult pretensions. The madness of momentary delusion is kept intact as the mirror image holds its own.

The story of Mahabharat in *Grandma's Art* is predominantly based on drawings with the text as an addendum. The artist, Santokba Dudhat, is an elderly lady who took to painting while she was putting her son through a painting course at the Baroda School of Art. She painted prolifically the theme of Mahabharat in the light of her own vision of the epic, filling scroll after scroll which ran the wall lengths of several rooms of the Bal Bhavan exhibition hall in Delhi. Her son wrote an accompanying text which was edited into a slim book for children.

It has the ingenuous subtitle – 'This book is an ideal guide to the painting'. The simplicity of Santokba's imagery is a direct expression of her very immediate relationship to image-making, unmediated either by training or forethought. The drastic editing had led to many gaps in the story-telling, but what comes through is the undiluted passion to communicate. The fecundity of imagination permeates the trees, waters, animals, fish, birds, flowers, humans, arrows, tears, joy, et al. – animating the tale that rolls on and on. Through this re-telling, one gets a simultaneously contemporary and vernacular experiencing of the tale. Obviously the need for appropriating and internalizing the given from the past is as important to one who is still part of the living tradition. That is why Santokba is able to open up her world to us. She wishes to communicate her particular understanding of the world and its relationships. Not many of us are able to express a personal point of view as successfully.

In contrast to Santokba's very folk-based interpretation of mythology, we have in *Seasons of Splendour* a thoroughly urban experience being showcased by Madhur Jaffrey whose cultural involvements have spanned the continents while still digesting the seasonal tales heard at the feet of her grandmother.

She invokes the intense, dry heat of Delhi summers and the verdant world under the cool, dense shade of the tamarind tree, around which the tales were re-moulded in the form of plays staged by the gang of cousins who were on holiday from a variety of convent schools.

She speaks of the smooth synthesis of images from *Vrata*-stories, told at appropriate times in the year marking the cycle of seasons, with Shakespeare or Robin Hood or the so many other intensely internalized personages involved in piquant relationships, gleaned from the English literary canvas. She then continues to narrate the stories in their annual sequential order, paraphrasing each with her own very personal equations with them which have more to do with the spirit of the festivities and other triggered memories such as learning to swim on watermelons in summer, or threading needles by moonlight in winter to sharpen the eyes on the occasion of the October full moon. Of course, the foods of each season and festival find a special mention as writing of recipe books is one of her specialties. A well-known actress as well, this aspect of her personality is amply reflected in the dramatic rendering of the stories and their associations. The inclusion of the self in the telling is what has made this book an intense and moving experience in

the reading. This mood would have been enhanced by making the references to the festivals by name and also to their special astrological significance vis-a-vis the season more specific.

Landscapes Children's Voices belongs to a completely different genre A group of young people in Tara Publishing are consciously working for an alternative movement in children's literature This includes the re-telling of folk tales, putting the actual lives of children into a narrative mould, sociological studies of neighbourhood educational situations; and a book like this one, attempts to link early literary geographic notions, based on Tamil literature of the Sangam period with present day ones, through the actual experiencing of the different landscapes by children of those areas.

There is a very conscious emphasis on the children's own voices being the direct medium for dialogue between the past and the present The word landscape refers to a gamut of relationships that connect the inner and outer worlds in specific geographical locations. This book is seen as a process to be shared, dwelled upon and developed as a means to further inquiry So they have games, craft ideas, science models and activities, stories with and without pictures and, of course, the inter-landscape dialogues, all in the voice and drawings of children themselves.

The book rounds off with a sound understanding of ecological issues This is a unique attempt to build cross-cultural bridges amongst children of different backgrounds – rural and urban as well as traditionally differing professional backgrounds dictated by their environment. It succeeds in arriving at understanding as poetic experience. This could not have happened if the people involved in organising such an effort did not consider themselves an active part of the process. The compilation is accompanied by an Educator's Guide conceived by Gita Wolf and Jaysree Nambiar, giving a structured approach to expanding upon the themes and arriving at individual equations with the book

The understanding that concepts considered traditional are not a static entity is at the root of finding the ability to build upon them in order to relocate and individuate in the present and ongoing context. This process is as old as time The difference is in the increasingly shorter period available for assimilation in more recent times. The hurtling pace of technological advance and the spreading sphere of forced homogenisation taking place through the increased reach of media at the behest of major economic forces is eating up the space for reflection in our daily lives. Our capacities to transform and transcend the daily dose of given data is being challenged. Such books hold promise to help form a counter force. It is becoming increasingly necessary to connect with the world spirit through a deeper connection with one's own

Amba Sanyal

THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION ADVERTISING ON CHILDREN by Namita Unnikrishnan and Shailaja Bajpai Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1996.

A FAVOURITE childhood rhyme I can recall went *'Ek pitara hamne khola, usme nikla gappu gola, us gole ko diya tamacha, katputli bankar voh nacha....'* It carried on in this strain, one delightful discovery unfolding into another

This book opens a similar Pandora's box for what we are dealing with here is not one problem but three – TV viewing, children and advertising. The authors seem well aware of this for they have thoughtfully segmented their work to study each of these. The last section is a series of recommendations based on the conclusions drawn from the earlier sections.

India may have been a late entrant to the charmed world of the idiot-box but we have lost no time in manifesting all the symptoms of a sick society. There is growing concern about the kind of society that we have created in 50 years of independence. Even more alarming is the 'degeneration gap' between parents and children. To some extent this is a phenomenon that is related to the rise of satellite television. That television viewing has shaped values, attitudes and minds is accepted but that advertising on television is the real culprit is something that few have reflected on. If you would like to know more about exactly how many children watch TV, when they watch it and what kinds of advertisements appeal to them, this book will help.

To millions of viewers, the world as shown on their television screen is the real one. Television fashions our preferences, self-images, cultural stereotypes and our values almost without our knowing. Sadly, the segment most vulnerable to this daily 'massage' are children. It is important to remember that this great leap forward has come about in a mere four years: with the commercialisation of Doordarshan and the entry of satellite TV. The mind boggles at what the impact of this will be on the generation that is growing up with just the TV as entertainment. This book is a pioneering attempt in this respect because even though it does not answer all the questions that crowd one's mind, it opens up areas of concern and alerts parents and educators of possible pitfalls.

The authors point out the dangers in making TV a baby-sitter. In home after home across the country, children come back from school to plonk themselves (food in hand) in front of the TV and swallow the mindless fare offered. What do children watch? According to the authors, 80% of the children between 8 and 15 watch Chitrahaar (a programme of Hindi film songs); 79.67% watch Hindi films. Cartoons are almost as popular and, surprisingly, 67.57% watch the news! Doordarshan (65.32%) still has the largest viewership (eat your heart out STAR). Equally revealing are figures of time spent

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For details please contact:

Dr. B. Ramesh Babu
Senior Academic Fellow in International Relations
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in front of the box (p. 81-85). As advertisements are beamed at regular intervals, it is easy to understand the race to capture prime time slots.

The TV sells a dream – and this dream is given a concrete form by skilful advertising. It is a world where problems have easy solutions, hunger and poverty do not exist, parents and children live in happy homes where even mothers who wash clothes smile and dance. The list may be endless but the message is the same each time: buy our product and see your life change. Matters are not helped either by sandwiching ads between serials which glorify upper class homes and lifestyles. Again there is the danger of certain advertisements encouraging young children to mimic daredevil acts.

But what we often forget is that TV is here to stay: a return to the Arcadian world of the fifties is no longer possible. The world is now a global village and 53 nations across this half of the world watch STAR TV. The authors agree that all advertising per se is not harmful. One recalls here the National Literacy Mission fillers or the Rag Desh series, which have not lost their shine even after hundreds of re-runs. There are other ads that project clean fun and healthy lifestyles. Yet, sadly, the book reveals that these seem to hardly interest children (p.214-15).

In the section on consumerism, the authors draw up a list of the favourite advertisements listed by children (p 312-13). The interesting fact here is that most are products they believe will be of use to them when they grow up. So while the upper crust children are drawn to ads about airlines, mastercards and so on, the lower segment is attracted to ads about refrigerators, TVs and washing machines. The message in either case is the same: buy, buy and buy. The book offers some heartwarming accounts of strategies devised to counter the blast of advertising. The Ann-Mary School in Dehradun mounted a campaign against buying war toys and offered a pleasant barter: any child prepared to trade a war toy was given a book, flute or ball in exchange.

Readers will find much to reflect on here: the values that we are promoting, the dangers of subliminal brainwashing that TV ads let loose, the gender and class biases that they reinforce, among others. The strength of the book is in its empirical study conducted by the authors; it has real-life stories that reveal amazing facts. When Sushma Swaraj commented on the vulgarity of flying skirts and skimpily-dressed women, she may have had an agenda to sell. Nevertheless, it is time we asked ourselves whether Doordarshan's swelling revenues are all we want. Is it not equally true that in aping networks that promote unbridled consumerism, we are in danger of losing a dignity that even illiteracy and poverty could not dent?

Ira Pande

New from Oxford

The Dozing Shaman

The Limbus of Eastern Nepal

Philippe Sagant

The Dozing Shaman is a collection of essays on the Limbus of eastern Nepal, a Tibeto-Burmese speaking group who live in the valleys located between Mount Everest and Mount Kanchenjunga. The Limbus, or the Yakthumbas, are one of the oldest of the Himalayan people. This book will interest anthropologists and historians as well as those interested in Nepal.

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Further reading

This is a general reading list, the main point of reference is children Some books are meant for children and those adults who cherish the spirit of childhood or those who seek to understand more about the world and the mind of children. Others are meant only for adults whose working lives are connected, directly or indirectly, with children All the listed books provide a greater understanding about and/or an insight into, the lives and needs of children.

Agnihotri R.K., A.L. Khanna and **Subir Shukla** Prashika (Eklavya's innovative experiment in primary education) Ratna Sagar, 1994

Ashton-Warner, Sylvia. Teacher. 1963.

Axline, Virginia M. Dibs: in search of self Penguin, 1971

_____ Play therapy. Ballantine Books, 1969.

Bhai, Giju Divaswapna. National Book Trust, 1990

Boulding, Elise. Building a global civic culture. Syracuse University Press, 1990.

Brock-Utne, Birgit. Educating for peace. Pergamon Press, 1985.

_____ Feminist perspectives on peace and peace education. Pergamon Press.

Burra, Neera. Born to work. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Einon, Dorothy. Play with a purpose: Learning games for children 6 weeks to 10 years . New York, Pantheon Books, 1985

Freire, Paulo Pedagogy of the oppressed. Penguin, 1972.

Fynn. Anna and the black knight. Fount, Harper Collins, 1990

_____ Mister god this is Anna. Ballantine Books, 1976.

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Gupta, Arvind. Kabad se jugaad. Eklavya, n.d.

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_____ The toy bag Eklavya, n.d.

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Holt, John. Freedom and beyond. Laurel edition, 1975.

_____ How children fail. Penguin, 1965.

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Illich, Ivan. Deschooling society. Harper Colophon Books, 1983.

Janosch. The treasure-hunting trip. Translated from the German by Anathea Bell. Beltz and Gelberg, 1990.

Johnson, David W. and **Roger T. Johnson**. Learning together and alone. Penguin, 1975.

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Kumar, Krishna. Social character of learning. Sage Publications, 1989.

Kuroyanagi, Tetsuko. Totto chan.

Lee, Harper. To kill a mockingbird. Heinemann, Pan Books, 1960.

MacCracken, Mary. A circle of children. New York: Signet, 1975.

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Mullarney, Maire. Anything school can do you can do better. Fontana, 1983.

Neil, A.S. Summerhill. Penguin, 1995.

Postman, Neil and **Charles Weingartner** Teaching as a subversive activity. Penguin, 1969.

Ritter, Bruce Sometimes god has a kid's face. Covenant House, 1988.

Saint-Exupery, Antoine de. The little prince. Translated from the French by Katherine Woods. Piccolo Pan, 1974.

Samples, Bob. Open mind, whole mind: parenting and teaching tomorrow's children today. California, Jalmar Press, 1986.

Shatsky, Stanislav. A teacher's experience. Progress Publishers, 1981.

Sobel, Jeffrey. Everybody wins. non-competitive games for young children. New York, Walker and Company, 1983.

Statham, June. Daughters and sons. Basil Blackwell, 1986.

Sukhomlinsky, Vasily. To children I give my heart. Progress Publishers, 1981.

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If interested, please send your latest C.V. along with the titles of the dissertations completed under your supervision, the year(s) of the award of M. Phil/Ph. D. degrees and a list of scholars currently working with you, along with their topics of research and dates of registration. Send your letters to

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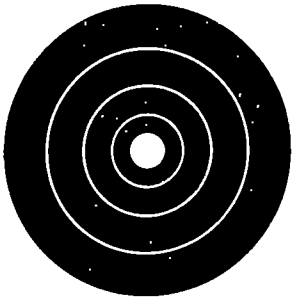

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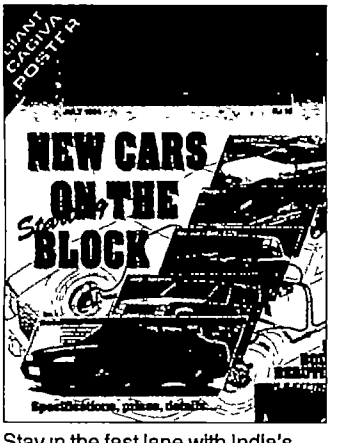

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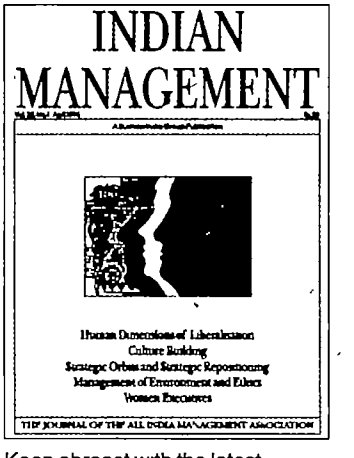

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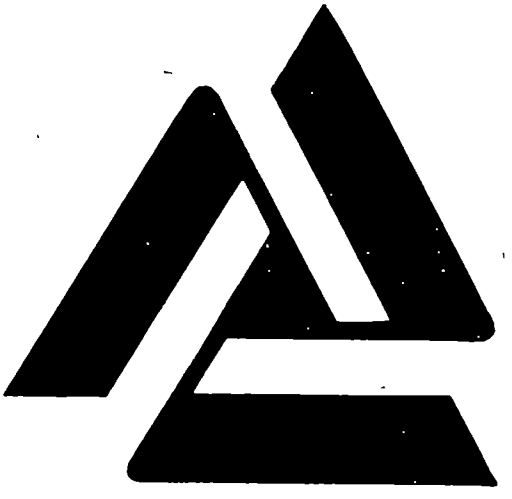

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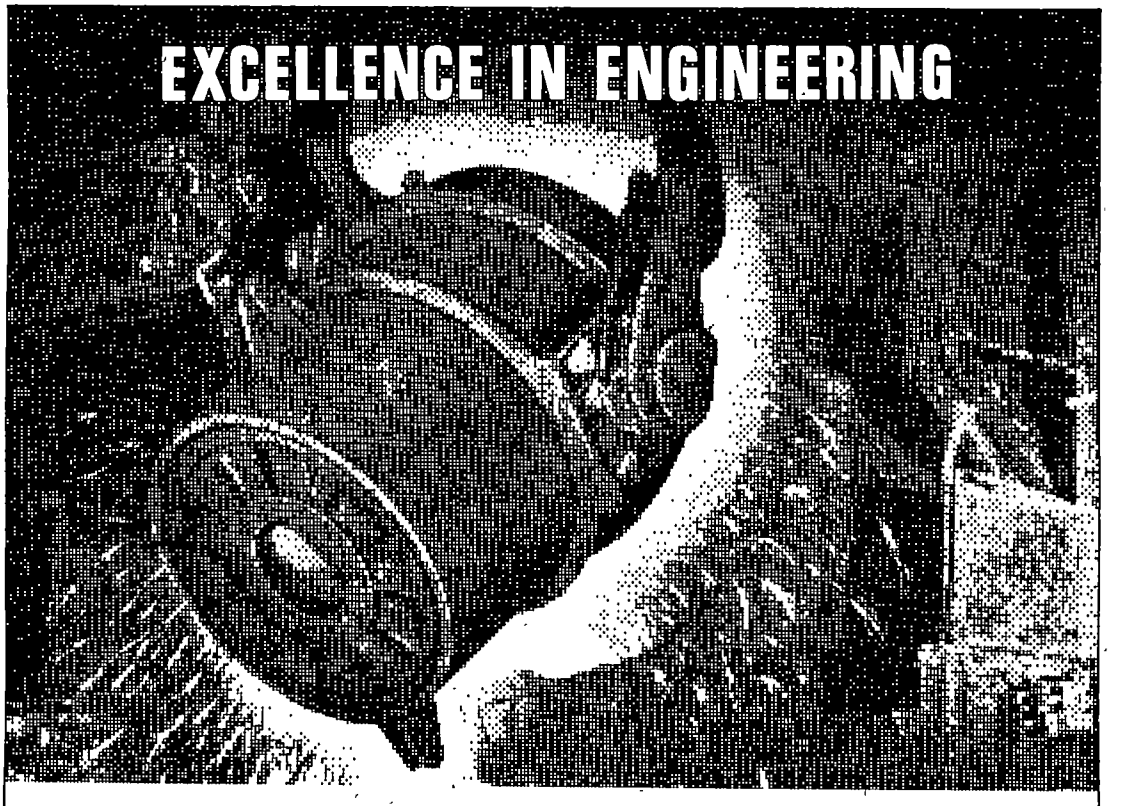

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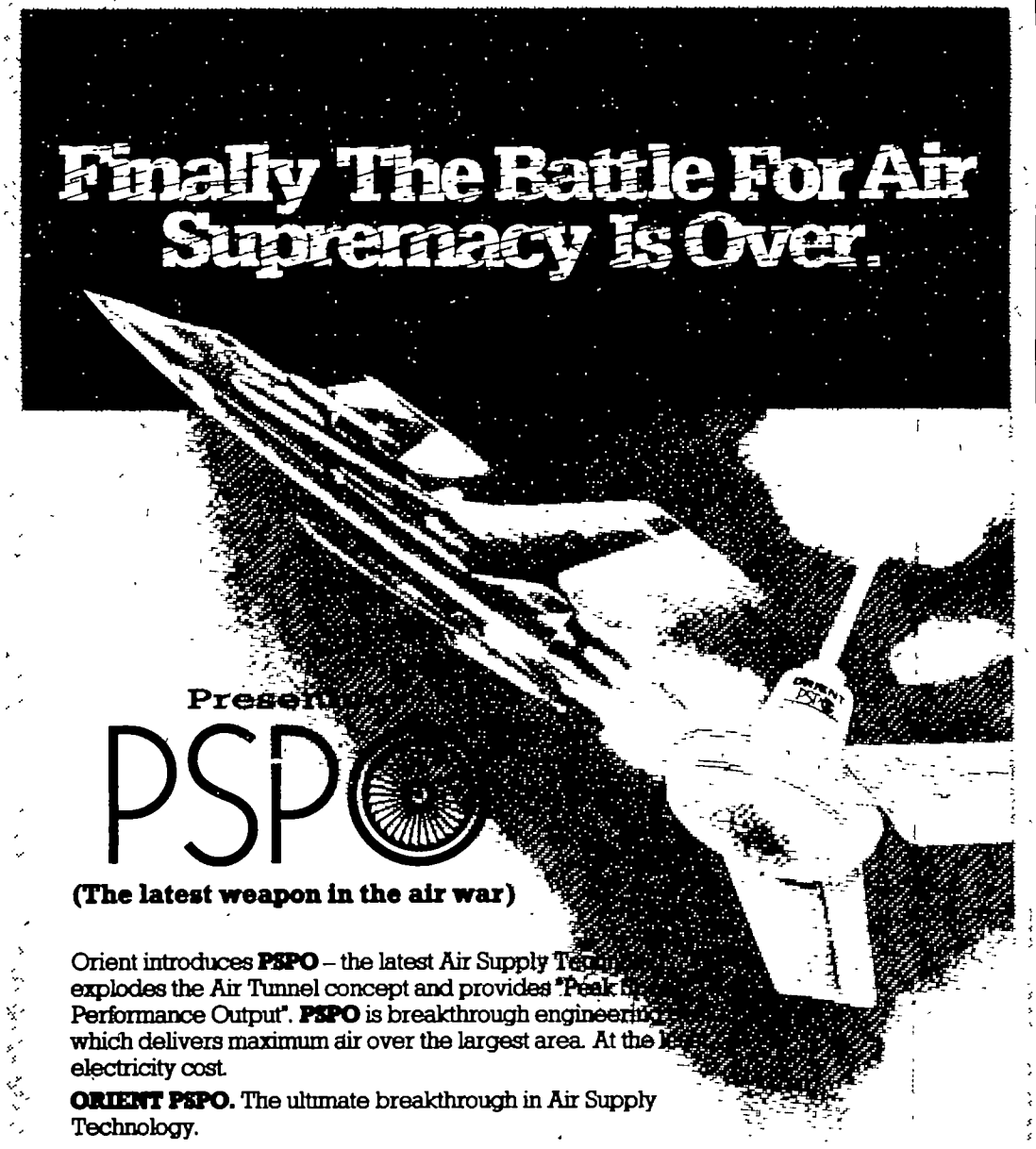

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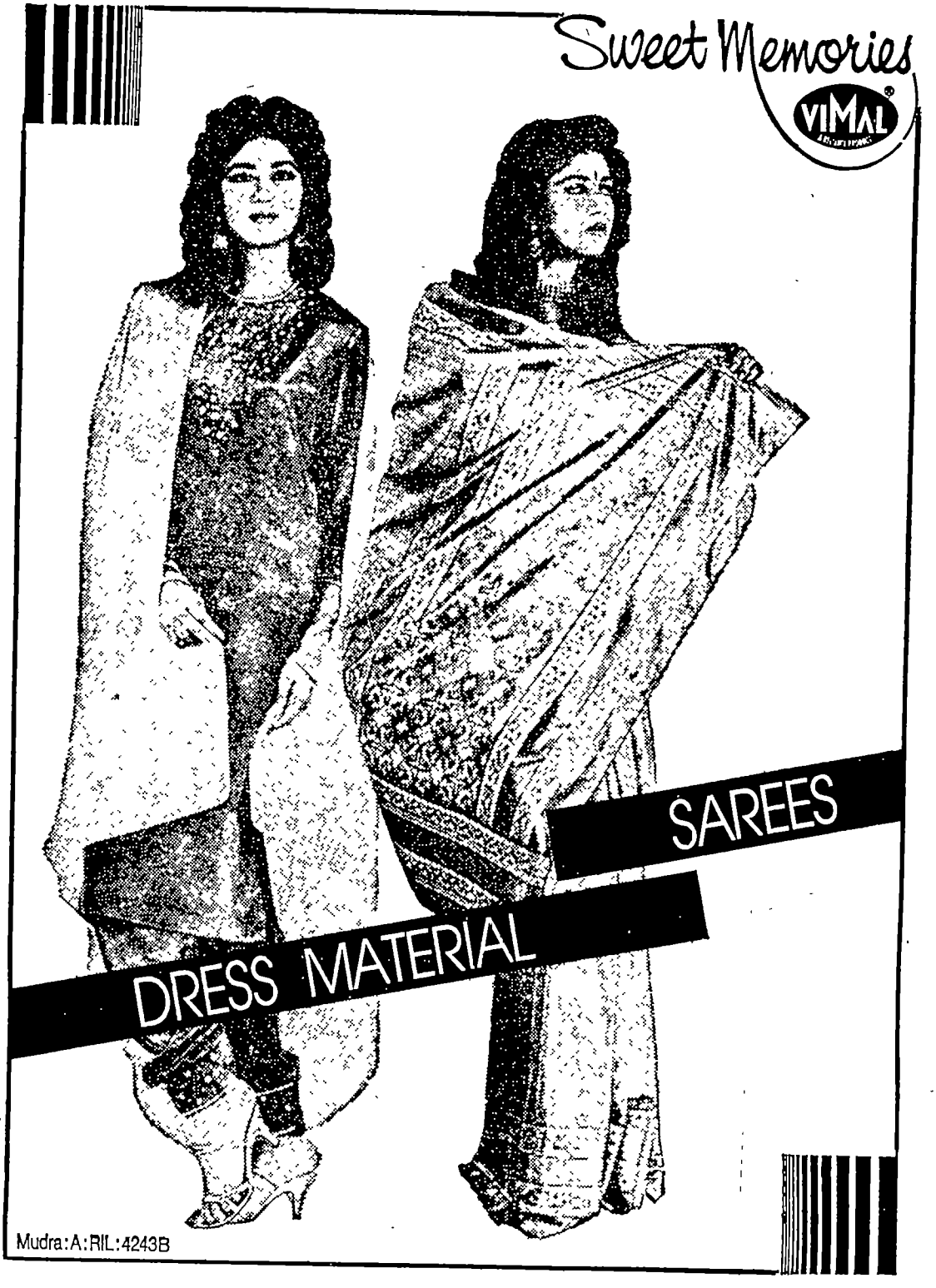
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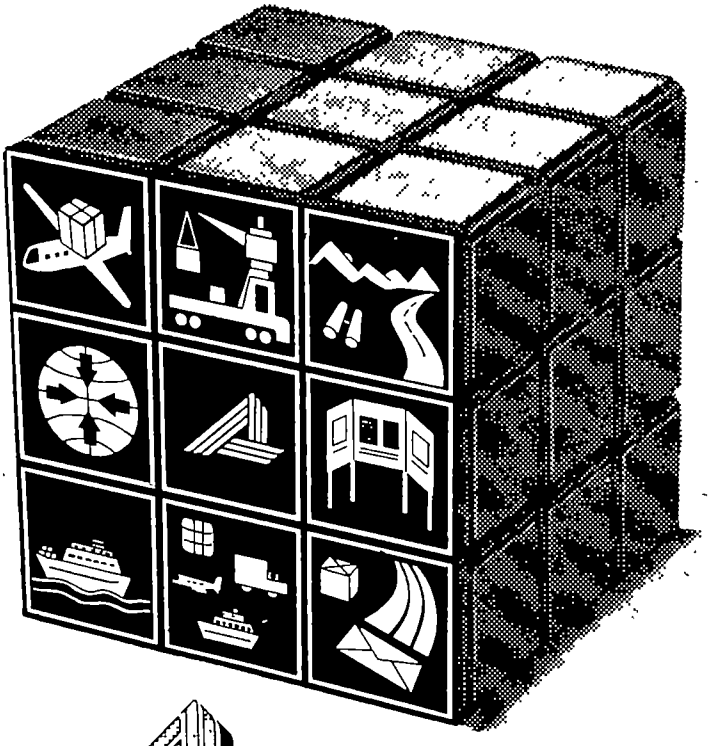

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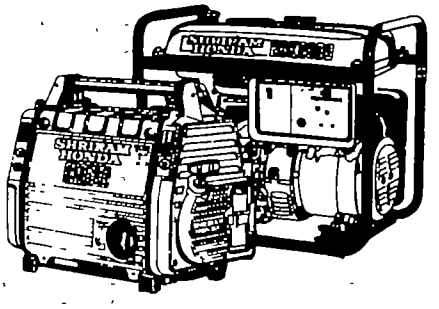

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The problem

THREE sour ironies mark the evolution of the Indian stand on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) issue. First, New Delhi, which pioneered the CTBT proposal way back in 1954 and has argued for it repeatedly as a worthy measure in the face of stiff resistance by the nuclear weapons states (NWSs), has now emerged as the biggest source of resistance or obstacle to its successful completion. Conversely, some of the NWSs which evaded a serious discussion of the ban repeatedly in the fifties and sixties, in 1977-80, and yet again in the late eighties, have emerged as the treaty's champions.

Second, by prematurely announcing on 20 June – eight days before the 'final text' of the Chairman of the Test Ban Committee Jaap Ramaker was tabled – that it would not sign the treaty in its present form, India effectively ceased negotiating the issue at *a critical juncture*, just when it could have leveraged its strength and bargained along with 29 developing states to secure a better treaty text. New Delhi scornfully spurned the Non-Aligned G-21 offer to help it harmonise their text language on key articles, and thus forfeited an opportunity to strengthen the treaty as an effective, non-discriminatory measure. It thus lost in two ways. It attracted opprobrium for its negative stand; and at the same time it contributed to a weakening of the CTBT, thus potentially compromising its own – and global – security interests.

And third, there has been a transformation of the domestic debate on the issue in the past few months. Many who have for decades urged the exercise, or at least the further development, of the Indian nuclear weapons option and railed against the 'effete' doctrines of disarmament, joined the debate as ardent proponents of disarmament and meaningful nuclear restraint, but only to attack the CTBT for its betrayal of this new-found cause. Having thus vilified the CTBT for being an *ineffectual disarmament-oriented* measure, they have since pleaded for the further deepening, development, expansion and even exercise of the nuclear option, that is *returned* to their real, original agenda. The terrain of contention has tended to shift: it is no longer so much about signing or not signing a CTBT, but about what further steps to take, presumably in the interests of 'national security', in order to keep out of any process of nuclear restraint and maintain the nuclear option in full, including the option to conduct tests.

How has this come about? Through what processes did New Delhi achieve a virtual reversal of its past stands and policies? What explains its twists and turns? What determined the contours of the domestic CTBT debate? It is futile to exclusively blame a handful of nuclear hawks or pro-Bomb lobbyists for this. There has been an orchestration of the shifts, both at the official and unofficial (or media) levels, if not actual collusion between the two through private briefings, carefully slanted and selectively planted stories. New Delhi itself shifted ground when from an overwhelming emphasis on 'global' and 'universal' principles, it suddenly started citing 'national security' considerations, without explaining what these might be, as a 'key factor' behind its 20 June decision.

How do we understand this shift? Is it stable? What changes of doctrine and principle does it portend? Where does India's nuclear policy go from here? What are the implications for regional and global security? What role is India likely to play in future international or regional initiatives for nuclear restraint, in particular the fissile material cutoff convention and other measures already on the agenda of the UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) at Geneva?

To start with, it is necessary to understand how the Government of India came to execute a shift in its stand vis-a-vis the CTBT. Some salient facts stand out. New Delhi not only pioneered the 'standstill agreement' proposal to ban nuclear testing in April 1954; it campaigned for it, by commissioning a first-rate scientific study of the health effects of atmospheric testing. For four decades it treated the CTBT as a partial but worthy measure following the plain (that is, non-convoluted) logic that any non-discriminatory step that leads to restraint on the development, manufacture, deployment, use or threat of use, of these weapons of

mass destruction is deserving of unstinted support. A CTBT, on this view, is too precious to be made a hostage to the NWSs' reluctance to undertake a commitment to disarm themselves.

Thus, New Delhi advocated the CTBT as an example of a universal, global, non-discriminatory, independent treaty and also included it in the various proposals it made, like the Five-Continent Initiative (1986) and the Rajiv Gandhi Plan of 1988. In 1993, it even co-sponsored with the U.S. a resolution in the UN General Assembly. There was no mention of 'nuclear disarmament', leave alone 'time-bound' disarmament. Then, in Autumn 1995, it suddenly shifted its stand and began to demand disarmament within a 'fixed time-frame', through statements of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee.

By late January 1996, it formally tabled amendments at the CD at Geneva introducing the 'time-bound' clause, not just in the Preamble of the Treaty, but also its main body, including Entry into Force. It also demanded an excessively strict definition of the scope of the treaty, while opposing the most popular one, the Australian definition in its Working Paper (WP.222):

'1. Each State Party undertakes not to carry out any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, and to prohibit and prevent any such nuclear explosion at any place under its jurisdiction or control.

2. Each State Party undertakes, furthermore, to refrain from causing, encouraging, or in any way participating in the carrying out of any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion.'

India's amendments could be seen either as a means of bargaining to secure improvements in the treaty and make it more watertight, or as an escape route out of the CTBT. Being intransigent on them, and accepting no moderation, could become an excuse for opposing the treaty and not signing it on the grounds that it does not meet India's requirements.

The first is a perfectly legitimate negotiating tactic compatible with an approach rooted in good faith and standard conference practices. The second tends to be devious, it is a means of counterposing one desirable goal to another, in order to defeat both. In the event, New Delhi appears to have chosen the second option. That alone can explain why it behaved the way it did between January and June to present the CD with a rejectionist face. Remarkably, *India was the sole state which did not moderate its initial stand at the CD.* All major players, including the U.S., UK, France, Russia and China did, whether on scope or linkage, or on withdrawal or verification, or on peaceful nuclear explosions and on-site-inspections.

This unique change of stand could not have become possible without a radical change in the terms of discourse on the CTBT and its contextualisation. Without presenting the CTBT as part of a process of rationalisation of nuclear weapons by the NWSs, it would have been impossible to castigate it as a false, unequal, 'discriminatory', 'bogus' or 'worthless', 'redundant' and 'dishonest' treaty, or a 'trap', 'conspiracy', and so on. The terms of public discourse were systematically altered over the span of a year to distort the CTBT's context and hide the reasons for its emergence on the CD's negotiating agenda in 1994 and its imminence in 1996.

This needed a new demonology, new myths, a new characterisation of India as a victim state, which the NWSs have singled out for discriminatory treatment, new ways of exaggerating real and imagined security threats to India, a complete distortion of the truth about the global security environment and the nuclear situation, and above all, a new emphasis on xenophobic nationalism, on insular, claustrophobic and militaristic notions of security and insecurity. This was manipulated through the mass media by strategically placed publicists and self-styled experts who launched a systematic and energetic campaign against the CTBT. The nature of the operation raises serious questions of journalistic ethics and the 'manufacture of consensus' on critical issues. But that is not the subject of this essay.

The pertinent point is that the CTBT was successfully presented as a 'second edition' of the much – and rightly – hated Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), as yet another manoeuvre in the NWSs', in particular the U.S.'s,

plan to maintain their hegemony and 'cap, roll back and eliminate' all other states' capabilities, with a special emphasis on the threshold states (India, Pakistan and Israel). This could only be done through a series of elisions, distortions and deliberate attempts to suppress the truth. The anti-CTBT lobby put out that the CTBT is a joint 'conspiracy' of the NWSs, ignoring the fact that the NWSs' motives, interests and positions on specific issues vary greatly, on some to the point of potentially threatening a treaty, and that their stands have changed significantly.

CTBT opponents also had to falsify the fact that the end of the Cold War has created a new situation which favours nuclear restraint in a quite new way, and that with all its limitations, vicissitudes and weaknesses, there *is* a new momentum which favours nuclear restraint and disarmament. After all, the past few years have seen the actual withdrawal or dismantling of thousands of nuclear weapons. Admittedly, some of them are tactical weapons which became redundant with the end of the Cold War. But then, it is equally plausible to argue that several classes of strategic weapons have also become redundant or dysfunctional, and have become ripe for removal.

How real is the momentum? When the Intermediate Nuclear Free Treaty (1987) and Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) I and II are fully implemented (following START II's likely ratification), U.S. and Russian arsenals will decrease by two-thirds, surely to mean reduction. Equally important, three NWSs with holdings of thousands of weapons, which could have found ways of retaining them if they really wanted to (Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan) have voluntarily abandoned them. Three threshold states (South Africa, Brazil and Argentina) have also renounced their capability.

There are other indications too of changes in perception and public opinion. Revulsion against testing and, to an extent, against nuclear weapons too, runs strong the world over. The fact that the Canberra Commission and think-tanks like the Henry L. Stimson Centre in the U.S. are actually advocating the total elimination of nuclear weapons, must not be ignored. Nor should the 8 July judgment of the International Court of Justice holding the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons contrary to international law (with some ambiguity about use in self-defence). Although symbolic, the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Joseph Rotblat signifies the same trend.

With all these limitations, the April-May 1995 conference to extend and review NPT was also of a piece with this. Although Indian official and media insularity has obscured this, the extension of the NPT last year was secured at a high cost, *not* by legitimising the possession of Indian weapons by the P-5, but by imposing further obligations on them, and through enhanced periodic reviews of the progress achieved in respect of the obligations (four preparatory meetings every five years). The 'Principles and Objectives' resolution of the conference marks some progress, albeit modest, in the direction of nuclear restraint and voices the concerns of the vast majority of the world's states. It may not be wrong to argue that the NWSs had to pay a heavier price to get the NPT indefinitely extended than they would have to, if it had only been extended by 25 years. (See *Indefinite Extension of the NPT: Risks and Reckonings,* by Rebecca Johnson, Acronym No. 7, London, 1995). The fissile material cutoff mandate given to the CD is a direct consequence of the 'Principles and Objectives' resolution.

It is therefore fair to argue that the global environment has become more, not less, favourable to nuclear restraint and disarmament in the post-Cold War period, and the legitimacy of the doctrines for the actual or deterrent use of nuclear weapons has eroded, especially in the West. It follows that it would be wrong to see the CTBT as a means of rationalising the possession, or further development and qualitative improvement, of nuclear weapons, or just as one more devious manoeuvre within a Machiavellian scheme. Rather, it is a partial, grudging acknowledgment of the need to undertake some demonstrative nuclear restraint measure, one which is limited, but by no means vacuous, fraudulent or irrelevant.

A genuine CTBT will bring about a slowing down and cessation of the qualitative nuclear arms race which has been the worst menace to world security for five decades. This surely is worthy in itself. Besides, a CTBT will have the important psychological and political impact of breaking the 'talk-build-test' format in which arms control has remained locked for decades. This could put further meaningful restraint and disarmament measures on the global agenda, without 'compensatory' rearmament, thus clearly setting the future direction – also a major gain. A CTBT would undermine the technological push behind the arms race and development of pernicious doctrines justifying nuclear deterrence or war fighting. It would also weaken the 'fear factor' – fears about rival intentions and plans, which in turn drive belligerency and rearmament.

The sheer value of creating a world without nuclear tests should not be underrated. Each nuclear test explosion provides validation of the arms-racer's, deterrence-monger's or nuclear war-fighter's faith in the potency and utility of these weapons of mass destruction. Each such bang confirms the cynical strategist's view that there is no alternative to the balance of terror, the sole route to peace and stability. Imagine a world in which there are no nuclear tests for 10, 20, 50, 100 years. Surely *that's* a world more amenable to greater restraint and sanity, non-coercion through horror weapons, and more conductive to nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Surely, the CTBT is a worthy, positive, non-discriminatory and highly significant nuclear restraint measure.

It has been contended that the CTBT should, and would, have been all this, but the way it has been drafted, it fails to meet two principal criteria: that it must have a nuclear disarmament context (or linkage), and that it must be truly

comprehensive and ban all tests in all environments, which could lead to the further development of nuclear weapons. through major modifications of existing designs or innovation of new-generation weapons. The contention is misconceived, factually incoherent and ignores the progress of the Geneva negotiations for the past two and a half years. Over this period, the NWSs – which first tried to put a relatively weak treaty on the table allowing for low-yield explosions with only a vague statement on its linkage with disarmament – have had to move towards a far better Preamble, a clear definition of scope, reasonable conditions on verification and on-site inspections, and on withdrawal from the treaty.

Consider the following. A greatly improved Preamble is already contained in the Ramaker 'final text'. This elaborate 10-paragraph Preamble anchors the treaty firmly in a disarmament context: the CTBT must prevent the 'development and qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons', and the 'development of advanced, new types of weapons' as part of 'systematic and progressive' efforts 'to reduce nuclear weapons globally'. The text locates the CTBT in a process to achieve 'nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament in all its aspects'.

This means that the CTBT as it exists is *not* just a non-proliferation measure, but a significant restraint measure in a step-by-step process towards complete nuclear disarmament. Indeed, logically, such a process would be inconceivable without a CTBT figuring in it at an early stage. A freeze on the further development of nuclear armaments is surely indispensable in any rational programme for the elimination of these weapons.

The G-21 are now seeking a further improvement in Preamble language. The NWSs' resistance to this can be broken; some western non-NWSs, as well as the G-21, are firm that the treaty be anchored in a strong disarmament context. If India joins forces with them, the CTBT could be further strengthened and the unacceptable 'Entry into Force' part of the Ramaker text can be modified into a reasonable and non-discriminatory provision.

What is important is *contextualisation*, not the *procedural* perspective of 'time-bound' disarmament demanded by India. A procedure such as a time-table or schedule does not concern the content and direction of a test ban – no more than the demand for, say, class-by-class elimination of nuclear weapons. It is surely unwise to make a good treaty hostage to impractical or excessive procedural conditions. Can New Delhi give a 'time-bound' commitment to resolving the Kashmir problem or the Cauvery dispute? Or London a schedule for resolving the Irish question? When India proposed its 'time-bound' amendment in January, it was widely seen as a tactical manoeuvre to get stronger language on the *substance of linkage*, not a method of achieving it. But it now turns out that the government is stuck on this position and has proved intransigent.

It has also been contended that a CTBT is 'ineffectual', 'redundant' or 'useless' because the NWSs no longer need to test nuclear weapons, having developed enough computer-based and sub-critical testing expertise. *Ergo*, the treaty won't achieve the stated purpose. But this mystifies what computer codes can do, and how far sub-critical testing can go. Computers cannot tell you what you don't already know. They cannot replace explosive testing which alone generates the data needed to benchmark, validate and revise computer codes. Being highly complex, non-linear systems involving extreme temperatures (tens of millions of degrees) and pressures, nuclear weapons cannot be easily simulated. Each computer code is specific to a certain set of parameters. New codes are needed for new parameters; that is, modified designs or new weapons. These can only be validated by explosive testing.

What of sophisticated 'sub-critical' tests and low-yield hydronuclear tests? Can these generate enough data to design and make new weapons or substantially modify existing designs? There is general agreement among scientists (in particular, peace-minded scientists) that hydrodynamic tests (which do not use fissile materials, nor involve a chain reaction) and other sub-critical tests are not adequate for new weapon development or qualitative improvement. They are at best auxiliary aids to explosive tests.[1] Even inertial confinement fusion, for which expensive laboratories (such as the National Ignition Facility in the U.S.) are being used, has severe limitations. There is no substitute, at least at this stage, for explosive testing of nuclear weapons if they are to be developed and refined.

Explosive testing (that is, full-fledged explosions or 'hydronuclear' explosions which involve a nuclear chain reaction, but which is quickly aborted) is a necessary point of reference for all sub-critical or laboratory-level experiments. Under the 'true zero-yield' commitment specifying the prohibition of all tests releasing nuclear energy, there can be no hydronuclear testing. Thus, the definition banning 'any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion' will serve the CTBT's purpose.

Most peace-minded scientists and independent experts worldwide, inducing Joseph Rotblat, the 1995 Nobel Peace Laureate, believe this. However, our so-called security 'experts' – few of whom can be credited with thorough scientific knowledge or consistency, leave alone creativity – have distorted these technical truths. Our policy-makers, advised by them and the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), have either bought into their technological

1. The interested reader should see *Testing Times, The Global Stake in a Nuclear Test Ban* by Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik, published by Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, *1996 Nuclear Weapons Databook Series* and *The Role of Hydronuclear Tests and Other Low-Yield Nuclear Explosives and Their Status Under a Comprehensive Test Ban*, by T B Cochran, C.E. Paine et al, Natural Resources Defense Council, New York, 1995; *Nuclear Weapon Tests: Prohibition or Limitation?* edited by J. Goldblat and D. Cox, OUP, 1988, and *Implementing the Comprehensive Test Ban*, SIPRI Research Report No. 8, edited by Eric Arnett, 1994

disinformation, or deliberately used it to obstruct reasonable agreement on the scope of the CTBT. There is no evidence that the Indian delegation even debated the issue of scope and definition of nuclear tests seriously at Geneva.

This raises an important issue, that of the *process* by which New Delhi effected its major shifts on linkage and scope, and later on an even more important consideration – namely, 'national security' – which it suddenly cited as a 'key factor' on 20 June behind its decision not to sign the CTBT in its present form. There has been no discussion or statement at the official level explaining the rationale of these shifts and changes of stand.

How did officials in the Ministry of External Affairs reach the conclusion that the Australian definition of scope is not comprehensive? Which experts or scientists advised them on the adequacy and effectiveness of sub-critical tests and computer simulation for weapon development? What published literature did they rely on? Who among our 5,000-plus DAE scientists (not one of whom has published a single paper on nuclear testing in recent years, or joined the international debate on testing) advised them? Foreign Secretary Salman Haider evaded the question at his 20 June press conference.

Take 'national security'. What threatens it? Has the security environment changed in recent years? If it has changed for the worse, are there official reports or documents that note the change, and list the measures (both military and non-military) that have been, or could be, taken to deal with the new threats? Precisely what 'national security' considerations are violated by the CTBT as it exists? Do these involve making and testing nuclear weapons? To what end? Through what sequence of discussions or debates has the government arrived at this? How might these be made more transparent?

The opacity of the process through which India's *volte face* was executed raises serious doubts about the government's sincerity and its intentions. These cannot be settled by *post facto* rationalisations about the alleged Sino-Pakistan ring magnet deal, Brown Amendment, indefinite extension of the NPT and so on. It is more plausible to argue that New Delhi had actually more or less decided, in its own bumbling, contradictory, confused and devious way, not to sign the CTBT, although it should have been clear to it that the treaty would not prevent it from having a 'credible minimum deterrent' against China as well as Pakistan (which is itself a questionable idea).

India's nuclear capability was demonstrated 22 years ago, and for first-generation fission weapons, no testing is necessary. Thus, unless it toyed with even more ambitious (and adventurist) plans to develop a full thermonuclear arsenal, or was under pressure from the DAE to keep all its options indefinitely open for unstated or vague reasons, it is difficult to explain why it shifted its stand – except for grandiose potential-superpower, nation-of-destiny self-perceptions.

At any rate, right until 1994, when the CTBT looked more like an abstract or distant possibility, New Delhi ardently advocated it. When it became imminent, New Delhi shifted its stand for irrational, devious and otherwise questionable – if not downright specious – reasons. In doing this, it also executed a shift of doctrine: from rooting foreign, security and nuclear policies in some general and universal principles, to promoting specific 'national security' considerations as defined and perceived by a handful of bureaucrats in the rarefied atmosphere of South Block. This is a dangerous shift fraught with serious consequences. An irresponsible, hawkish, ultra-right government could tomorrow cite 'national security' considerations to make and deploy weapons of mass destruction or launch war on a neighbour.

Equally important, this change could propel India towards embracing the doctrine of 'nuclear deterrence', which India has traditionally rejected as 'abhorrent'. By doing this, New Delhi would be violating every single premise on which its classical positions were based: the irrelevance of nuclear weapons to genuine security, their total indefensibility under all conditions, their contribution to international and regional insecurity, and their role in legitimising the use of force, and massive force at that. This would also go against the position the government itself took at the World Court hearings only last year, pleading that the manufacture, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is violative of international law and incompatible with humanitarian law.

Mercifully, it is still not too late to reverse the shift and rescue the situation. But that means New Delhi should return to Geneva with a positive, constructive attitude and try to secure an improved treaty in close cooperation with the G-21. It may not be unrealistic to demand and expect that India could still drive a good, favourable bargain: considerable improvements in treaty text (besides a new, equal 'Entry into Force' provision) and a specific commitment from the NWSs in the form of a solemn declaration that they will not develop new nuclear weapons or make qualitative improvements in existing weapons, and that they see the CTBT as effectively preventing such development and ending the nuclear arms race.

This will need courage and foresight. But then no major act that contributes to any other good cause has ever been accomplished, even addressed, without courage and foresight. Can New Delhi summon these up? Through what process? Can it retrieve the disarmament agenda? Or will it choose the easy but dangerous option of being cynical, keep out of the CTBT and thus contribute to defusing the disarmament momentum – compromising its own security in the long run? That is the central problem that confronts India today.

PRAFUL BIDWAI

The moment of truth

J N DIXIT

GENERAL indications are that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) will be finalised and be remitted to the United Nations General Assembly one way or the other for signatures, ratification and implementation between August and December this year.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Offices in Geneva, Ambassador Arundhati Ghose, in a statement made at the Committee on Disarmament on 20 June, categorically stated that India will not sign the treaty in its present form. The Clean Draft called the 'Chairman's Text' was submitted to the Committee on Disarmament by the Chairman of the *ad hoc* Drafting Committee, Jaab Ramaker of the Netherlands last month (in June). Eschewing the technical arguments which we have put forward about the flaws in the draft CTBT, in simple terms the reasons why India will not be a party to this agreement are:

(i) It is only a horizontal non-proliferation measure; not a genuine attempt at comprehensive nuclear disarmament;

(ii) The existing nuclear weapon powers will continue to have the freedom to upgrade their nuclear arsenal through simulation tests and computer operations in their nuclear laboratories;

(iii) The safeguards and monitoring/inspection regimes would not fully cover the existing nuclear weapons capacities of the nuclear weapons powers.

(iv) The disciplinary regime envisaged in the CTBT will fully cover *only* 'non-nuclear weapon', and 'nuclear weapons capable' states.

(v) Provisions of the CTBT impose discriminatory restrictions on non-nuclear weapon powers' capability to develop their own nuclear technologies even for peaceful purposes;

(vi) The provisions controlling uses of nuclear raw materials and transfer of nuclear technology are discriminatory providing for permanent restrictions only on non-nuclear weapon states;

(vii) The nuclear weapon powers retain the option to resume their nuclear tests on the basis of overriding considerations of their respective national security. This option is not allowed to non-nuclear weapon states;

(viii) Sanctions stipulated in the CTBT against countries violating its provisions are discriminatory, punitive and can be unilaterally imposed by the five nuclear weapon powers under pretended instrumentalities of the UN.

(ix) CTBT provisions as formulated negate the sovereignty of the non-nuclear weapon states to exploit and utilise their own indigenous nuclear resources, capacities for peaceful or security purposes;

(x) The proposed CTBT does not provide in any manner for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within any time frame, short-term or long-term.

(xi) The treaty allows interference by international agencies backed by the five nuclear weapon powers in the nuclear and atomic policies of the individual states.

Since India is not willing to sign the CTBT as it is, what are the options open to it?

1. Reject the CTBT and continue our present policy of doing no nuclear tests;

2. Conduct a nuclear test and then offer to sign the CTBT;
3. Reject the CTBT and conduct a nuclear test nevertheless;
4. Sign the CTBT if it incorporates the provisions meeting our concerns after further negotiations;
5. Block a consensus on the treaty by voting against it;
6. Sign the CTBT subject to *quid pro quo* being offered to us like Permanent Membership of the UN Security Council and Permanent Membership on the Board of Governors of IAEA.

Before venturing an opinion on the practicality of exercising one or the other of these options, an analysis of recent developments regarding the CTBT and Indian reactions thereto would be relevant.

Recent weeks have witnessed considerable media cogitation and comments on whether India should sign the treaty, whether India can block the finalisation of this agreement which does not meet India's security concerns or the objectives of non-discriminatory disarmament and non-proliferation. However, the cogitation about not signing the CTBT or blocking its coming into force have become progressively redundant.

It is worthwhile detailing developments which have occurred in Geneva at the Committee on Disarmament in support of this assessment. The *ad hoc* drafting committee of the CTBT under the chairmanship of Ramaker of Netherlands has finalised what is called the 'Chairman's text' of the CTBT. This was circulated to the Committee on Disarmament early in June. All the problems reflected in the 1200 'square bracketed'[1] paragraphs have been removed. The Chairman's text is a 'clean draft' purportedly reflecting the consensus in the Conference on disarmament (CD) on the CTBT. The Chairman's text of the agreement does not take into account or address any of the concerns expressed by India in the meetings of the CD on the CTBT since last year up to date. Our concerns were not even discussed or negotiated upon before the finalisation of this clean draft which would be submitted to the CD for endorsement at the end of the month.

China, the most important country voicing reservations about the proposed CTBT till recently, announced through its Ambassador at Geneva on 6 June that it will be a signatory to the proposed CTBT. China withdrew its reservations on provisions and stipulations governing peaceful nuclear explosions, negative security assurances and peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the proposed agreement. It is significant that China conveyed its agreement to the CTBT, simultaneously conducting the last of its nuclear tests in the current series.

China's agreement to abide by the proposed CTBT at this stage implies two things: First, that it has completed its testing programme to meet its technological requirements for a period of the coming decade or two. Secondly, China's falling in line with the non-proliferation objectives of the U.S. and its western allies could be based on some attractive *quid pro quo* which the U.S. would have offered China. It would be reasonable to speculate that the United States has agreed to supply China with necessary data and computer codes for keeping its nuclear technology updated. It should be recalled that the U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry had made this offer to China during his visit to Beijing in October 1994. The offer was later soft-pedalled and pulled back from the sphere of public discussion.

Another significant point to be noted in the Chinese policy stance is that of China being stridently insistent that the proposed CTBT should cover all nuclear capable states. The Russian Federation has endorsed this stand, though not in the same assertive language. The drafting committee of the CTBT has been mindful of this particular concern not only of China and Russia, but of the remaining three nuclear weapons states as well. The proposed procedures about the timing of the treaty states that it will come into force when the eight states registered with th International Atomic Energy Agency a having nuclear facilities on their territor ratify the agreement.

To ensure that all nuclear capabl states fall within the ambit of the propose CTBT, the text of the 'articles on the entr into force of the agreement' proposes th following criteria.

The clause states that all countrie which have seismic stations (there are 5 such stations distributed among 36 cour tries including the five nuclear weapo states, India and Pakistan) should b governed by the agreement. Since Isra does not have a seismic station, instea of naming that country, the drafting com mittee has included a second criterio The relevant clause of the agreemer states that all countries which have radi nuclide laboratories should also be go erned by the agreement. (14 countries fa in this category; 13 out of these are alread covered by the first criterion mentione above). Israel is the 14th country whic has a nuclide laboratory.

What should India do at th juncture when the general momentu is towards the adoption of the CTBT, th context of the expected procedu which would be followed to bring th CTBT into force? If the treaty is finalise by the end of July (the date being adv cated by the U.S. and other importa countries is 29 July), then the Chairma of the Committee on Disarmament wi submit the 'Chairman's text' to the C asking it to endorse it by consensus. I will then remit the treaty text to the U Secretary-General with a request that h convenes 'a signing conference' for th CTBT. There is little likelihood of Ind being able to block this process, becau politically India will be completely is lated in this stance. The political ar public opinion reaction in the intern tional community would be negative, wi negative material ramifications for Indi The final draft which has gone through complicated process of negotiations ar has been the result of a number of con promises by a large number of countrie will have political, ideological and em

1 'Square bracketing' paragraphs in a UN document means one or more countries have reservations about the contents of such paragraphs

ional endorsement of the international ommunity.

Even procedurally, India would ot be able to stop the convening of a signing conference'. Even if, taking dvantage of the procedures governing he CD, we try to block the finalised draft, he Security Council can take note of the inalised draft of the CD *sui-generis* and ass a resolution, asking the Secretary Jeneral of the UN to convene a 'signing :onference'. Even otherwise, the General ssembly can take note of the draft and ass a resolution asking the Secretary Jeneral to convene such a conference. The likelihood is that if the Security Council takes such action, its resolution will be unanimous. In the General Assembly, such a resolution will have overwhelming majority support. Punitive action envisaged in the proposed CTBT against states not participating in the reaty must also be taken note of.

The proposed CTBT provides that states, parties to the treaty, can impose collective sanctions against those countries which violate the principles and objectives of the treaty. The 'states, parties to the treaty' can also refer such violations to the Security Council, requesting the Council to impose sanctions on a country or countries violating the objectives of the treaty. It is perhaps these provisions which are being put in place which resulted in the United States Government spokesman stating in April last that the U.S. is not too worried about India not signing the CTBT.

U.S. policy orientations, articulated since the beginning of 1996 on this subject, have also to be taken note of. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, stating the guiding principles of U.S. foreign policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government in Harvard University, said in January 1996 that 'the end of the Cold War has given the U.S. an unprecedented opportunity to shape a more secure world in which serious threats of proliferation have to be obliterated'. U.S. Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, in an interview to Dian McDonald of the U.S. Information Agency in the early summer of 1996, underlined that nuclear non-proliferation is the key item on the USA's foreign policy agenda.

Elaborating further, he said, 'The U.S. has taken the lead for some years, while trying to make sure that there was an international regime which would discourage proliferation and, if necessary, take international action against proliferators. That is why the United States has led the effort to replace the COCOM regime that was in place during the Cold War, to limit the transfer of sensitive technology to the Soviet Union and members of the Warsaw Pact, and to revise that understanding, so that 'rogue nations' (in the opinion of the USA) such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea could be denied international access to the kind of technology which would assist programmes of nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, biological weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. This is one area in which we were exceptionally active.'

U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphael, in a similar interview to the U.S. Information Agency Officer Jean Vander Woude, has stated that USA is deeply concerned with finding a way to curb proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missiles. The United States is simultaneously advocating an expanded role and jurisdiction for the International Atomic Energy Agency.

The Board of Governors of the IAEA which recently met in Vienna has discussed requirements of more detailed reports about domestic nuclear activity to be submitted to member countries of the IAEA. The report is also to include details about countries and export of material used in nuclear facilities. The IAEA is also seeking more sweeping monitoring and search authority for its inspectors. The process is being pushed despite objections from countries like Japan and Germany.

The Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, Hollum, summed up the approach in a statement on 6 June when he advised countries like India that while the United States can live with countries not endorsing the CTBT, they should not block the adoption of this important agreement.

Given India's national security interests, it is clear that we cannot be party to the CTBT in the form that it is emerging. The manifestos of all our political parties have clearly articulated their opposition to a discriminatory CTBT delinked from the overall purpose of non-discriminatory disarmament and elimination of nuclear weapons from all countries within a defined time frame. We have to retain our nuclear capabilities for security as well as peaceful purposes and at the same time avoid being isolated from the general orientation of the international community towards a test ban, though it is being conceived in a compartmentalised and narrow perspective. If the isolation were just political or ideological, one would not be too concerned. But the isolation will affect our economic, technological and security interests adversely.

In the circumstances, our approach to the issue should be on the basis that (*a*) no purpose would be served by trying to block the adoption of the CTBT; (*b*) we must immediately pull back from the negotiations in the Committee on Disarmament of the CTBT since we have already announced that we will not sign this treaty. Despite our commitment to a comprehensive test ban, and despite our having mentioned the legitimate concerns affecting a large number of countries relation to this agreement, the official draft totally ignores our concerns and our approach on this vital issue; (*c*) we must indicate that we remain committed to a Comprehensive Test Ban as an integral step towards complete nuclear disarmament within a defined time-frame; (*d*) despite the predicament that we would face after the adoption of the CTBT and limitations thereof, we must ensure that our nuclear manpower and technological capacities are not eroded. Our research programmes should be continued and our scientific manpower should be nurtured so that it can be engaged in sustaining our nuclear capacities. Tactical adroitness, rather than futile defiance, is in order for us now.

Hegemonic nuclear ideas

ZIA MIAN

AS PRISONERS in a nuclear South Asia there is much to be learnt from reading the notebooks of others who have struggled to understand the ideas that have incarcerated them. One such was the Italian communist, Antonio Gramsci. He pointed out that ideas, like nations, states, communities and social orders, do not come from heaven: they have a history and a process of maintaining their existence. The prevailing ideas in a society at any time, he wrote, are those of the ruling class. By having their ideas accepted by everyone, the ruling class establishes the legitimacy of its position.

It is a simple process to extend his argument to the international community, and nuclear weapons. This suggests that the position taken by the U.S., and other nuclear weapons states, recognised by most other states as the first among the supposed equals that make up the international community will, in time, lead other countries to similar ideas. Pakistan, India, and that seemingly invisible nuclear nation, Israel, appear particularly attracted to these nuclear ideas.

This line of argument may appear strange in light of the fact that Indian and Pakistani state security managers have refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and will probably not sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). At first sight, this would suggest

nat they do not share the ideas of the uclear weapons powers, who have all igned on to these treaties in one way or nother. But, despite their protestations bout the discrimination – and non-niversality – of these treaties, Pakistan nd India are not staying out of them ecause of a sense of moral outrage, or ense of injustice and certainly not out of ny commitment to 'real' disarmament.

India and Pakistan, while claiming o be opposed in principle to unfair and iscriminatory treaties (which these ndoubtedly are, but then so are all the ther international treaties these two ountries have signed) have the same ommitment to nuclear weapons as the uclear weapons powers. This is evident rom the way elites in both countries have ccepted the 'common-sense' about uclear weapons that characterises the uclear weapons states. Policy makers in oth countries now talk as blithely of nuclear deterrence', and 'nuclear secu-ty', as any American strategist of the ast fifty years.

This way of looking at the problem elps explain the tragic, but not unex-ected, failure of the CTBT negotiations. t also suggests that nuclear policy after he CTBT will be much the same as what has already been – a story of the hopes or peace crashing on the rocks of nuclear ecurity 'common-sense'. Recognising his means that those who want to free the world of nuclear weapons must now make ar more radical demands.

There are two straightforward lines f argument that show why the official laims of Indian and Pakistani govern-ments that they want disarmament are ot to be believed. The first follows from xperience with international arms ontrol treaties. The U.S. and the other uclear weapons states have negotiated hese treaties reluctantly, and tried to make the best of them by constructing hem so as to keep or enhance some ense of advantage. It is only because ndia and Pakistan and Israel share this way of thinking, but could not find a way f keeping or gaining a similar sense of rotecting some perceived interest that they refused to sign the NPT, and now resist signing the CTBT.

The similarity between Pakistan and India's position is often breathtaking. For example, it impossible to say, without knowing in advance, whether it was a Pakistani or an Indian leader who said that their country 'has neither succumbed in the past, nor would it come under pressure now'. It would only support a CTBT that 'was equitable and non-discriminatory'. Or, the person who said, in a similar vein, 'we have refused to accede to the discriminatory order of today's international nuclear regime'. It was in fact the President of Pakistan in the first case and India's ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament in the second. Their chorus contrasts sharply with the voices coming from the majority of other states who – believing in the principle of disarmament where any kind of control is better than none – have signed, or intend to sign, the NPT and the CTBT.

The second argument becomes evident from the deliberate linkages that the nuclear weapons states, India, Pakistan and Israel build into their positions. The U.S., and other nuclear weapons states insist on keeping their nuclear weapons until there is global nuclear disarmament, whenever that is. By arguing for all or not at all, their commitment to disarmament is conditional. Pakistan's official position on nuclear disarmament is similarly conditional: it will keep its nuclear weapons as long as India does. The Indian government's position is also conditional, it will keep nuclear weapons until there is global nuclear disarmament. Israel refuses to discuss disarmament until the whole Middle East disarms.

This conditional or dependent disarmament approach that these countries share contrasts sharply with the fact that most countries of the world have never expressed any desire to build nuclear weapons in the first place. It is also at odds with the approach taken by South Africa, which built nuclear weapons and then gave them up, or Brazil and Argentina, both of whom had nuclear weapons programmes and gave them up.

Conditional disarmament is convenient for all those states who fear that their weapons may be taken away. A classic example is U.S. nuclear policy after the Cold War. It was while testifying to Congress in 1993 that the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency most clearly and vividly summed up U.S. official thinking about the world after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He said: 'We have slain a large dragon, but we now live in a jungle filled with a bewildering variety of poisonous snakes.'

New threats suddenly appeared, and the response was the same as before – nuke them. This is clear from the new U.S. Doctrine For Joint Nuclear Operations produced in 1993. Formulated under the direction of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it says 'the fundamental purpose of U.S. nuclear forces is to deter the use of weapons of mass destruction (that is, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons) particularly nuclear weapons, and to serve as a hedge against the emergence of an overwhelming conventional threat'. And then goes further: 'the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction may allow a potential aggressor to develop a weapons of mass destruction arsenal capable of being deployed against U.S. nuclear forces deployed in regional crisis.' The threat has been pushed so far into the future that it is unidentifiable except as a 'potential aggressor' who 'may' develop nuclear weapons that were 'capable of being deployed'.

This doctrine, naturally enough, can be conveniently replicated by every other country that wishes to do so. The U.S. points to everyone, now and in future, China points to the U.S., India points to China, and Pakistan to India. The trigger fingers point in blame, but as someone once said, the other three fingers point back. For all of them, nuclear war is thinkable. They share the paranoia that underpins nuclear ideas.

That South Asia's elites share these ideas is clear from the stupidities of 'recessed', 'opaque' or 'non-weaponised' (which should perhaps be 'nearly weaponised') deterrence presumed to operate

in South Asia. The fact that there is any appeal to any kind of deterrence at all shows that the intellectual tools with which security is understood, and managed, are based on second-hand ideas that are made in America.

How far this borrowing goes may be determined to some extent by assessing whether deterrence as a word, and thus as a concept, exists in the South Asian languages. In all likelihood it does not. It would not be the first time. Russian had no word for deterrence, it had to be invented when the concept came from the U.S., along with nuclear weapons and the Cold War. The same may have happened with Chinese.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that is still going through the negotiating mill shows just how far nuclear ideas have become established in South Asia. As everyone knows, a nuclear test ban was an Indian idea, proposed by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1954. For decades, India persisted with this idea and for decades the nuclear weapons states resisted any kind of international control on nuclear weapons.

The source of this resistance has always been clear. Herbert York, a former head of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, where U.S. nuclear weapons are designed, pointed out that of all the international arms control measures, the CTBT has met with 'more opposition in the (U.S.) defence establishment than any other'. The reason is that no matter how flawed, a test ban will make life more difficult for weapons designers, weapons engineers, and military planners. As a recent SIPRI report noted, a CTBT even now will prevent the development of some kinds of weapons altogether, and the weaponisation of the designs of others, even in the case of the U.S. This has been echoed by U.S. Central Intelligence Agency head, John Deutch, who has said the CTBT will freeze the position of countries on the 'nuclear learning curve'.

It is because of this that U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories have been struggling to find a way round the CTBT. The U.S. Sandia National Laboratory, which is responsible for engineering nuclear weapons, in its Institutional Plan for the next five years, argues for 'ongoing development of advanced weapons systems to retain America's technological edge in military systems'. The Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, which designs nuclear weapons, has asked for new facilities so that 'reliable new weapons may continue to be put into the arsenal, especially considering...the pending Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty'.

As the U.S. develops new design and testing facilities for its nuclear weapons as part of its Science Based Stockpile Stewardship programme, other countries, recognising the logic at work, play follow the leader. Russia has said it intends to start a similar programme. France has chosen to following another U.S. lead by building a special laser for laboratory experiments on materials and components useful for hydrogen bombs. China, which cannot do either, continues carrying out underground nuclear tests.

In South Asia the argument is being made with particular force that it is only because of such activities that nuclear powers are now prepared to conclude a CTBT. These states can do sophisticated laboratory experiments and computer simulations of what happens when a nuclear weapon goes off. And the nuclear weapons states have made sure that while many kinds of nuclear weapons tests are banned, these experiments and simulations are permitted by the CTBT.

These arguments are all undeniably true, but totally hypocritical coming from the establishments of India and Pakistan. While both claim that they want a 'real' CTBT, one that is 'effective, equitable and non-discriminatory', they are actually engaged in the narrowest nuclear security thinking, and presenting it as principle. Now that India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons, and the nuclear establishment want to keep and develop them, the arguments against signing the CTBT are being used as cover for finding a way round the constraints imposed by the CTBT.

The limited scientific and political options for Pakistan and India's bomb-builders mean they cannot do sophisticated experiments, or computer simulations like the U.S., Russia, Britain and France, and unlike China, they cannot let off nuclear explosions. Consequently the only option open in both India and Pakistan to the weapons designers, and their public mouth-pieces, is trying to invent arguments why both countries should stay out of the Treaty.

For instance, Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Aseff Ali, claims the CTBT 'would be rendered virtually meaningless if its universality were to be eroded by the non-participation of a state like India'. This argument would barely make sense if the U.S. stayed out of a CTBT, and makes no sense at all when applied to India. To present India as the measure of Pakistan's universe shows that Pakistan's position on the CTBT is no more than a way of hiding behind India.

In India, it is no better. Foreign Minister, I.K. Gujral has said recently 'India wants to watch the situation and assess from time to time the threat to our security and respond accordingly'. This means only one thing, the state security managers in India are not willing to give up their option to carry out a full-scale nuclear test explosion.

Just how bogus the arguments are about the CTBT is seen from what is missing in the South Asian debate, except in the writings of a handful of people such as Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik. This is the recognition that the CTBT has great value simply because it is an internationally agreed treaty involving the future of nuclear weapons. To put it simply, the CTBT is a formal recognition that nuclear weapons are bad. As such, it is another normative step towards a nuclear weapons free world. The CTBT is another nail, bent and rusty after forty years of haggling certainly, but a nail nevertheless in the coffin of the nuclear age.

In any event, India and Pakistan following the lead of the U.S. and other nuclear weapons states in exercising conditionality, but having failed to get the CTBT that they say they wanted, will in all likelihood stay out. This is not the firs

me this kind of thing will have happened. The 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty banned nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, under water and in space, after huge international protests about the effects of radiation (it is estimated that close to half a million people are likely to have died by the year 2000 from cancers induced by the radiation released in these tests). While the U.S., USSR, and Britain signed on, and stopped nuclear testing in the atmosphere, as late-comers to nuclear testing France and China remained outside the Treaty and continued to carry out such tests. France eventually stopped in 1974 and China in 1980. India and Pakistan may well adopt a similar position with regard to the CTBT.

No matter what the final outcome of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty turns out to be, the next item on the non-proliferation and arms control agenda is the ban in the production of highly enriched uranium and plutonium for nuclear weapons, a Fissile Material Cut-Off (FMCO). This is where international, and South Asian, nuclear policy will focus now.

That the battle lines for the FMCO talks have already been drawn is evident from the negotiations to date at the Conference on Disarmament at Geneva. Thirteen months were spent on talks about what the actual talks should be about. Not surprisingly, the nuclear weapons states want to restrict any discussion to banning future production of nuclear weapons material. It can he argued that, just as with the CTBT, this is because the nuclear weapons states have stopped producing such weapons-grade material. They are supporting the negotiations because they have made and stockpiled so much material they don't need any more – the U.S. has not produced enriched uranium since 1964. Moreover, in all the nuclear weapons states, production facilities are ageing, and building new ones will be a very costly affair.

Pakistan, however, has been insisting that the reduction of the stockpiles of weapons-grade fissile material that have already been accumulated should be included in the negotiating mandate. It is not an arbitrary reduction that Pakistan wants. This is clear from the statement of Pakistan's ambassador to the talks that what was sought was a 'schedule for the progressive transfer of existing stocks to civilian use and to place these stockpiles under safeguards, so that the unsafeguarded stocks are equalised at the lowest possible level'. The use of the 'lowest possible level', rather than zero, gives the game away. Pakistan wants the other countries to reduce their stocks of nuclear weapons material down to the level it has.

How's that for a principled position? Forced to stop the production of highly enriched uranium by American sanctions five years ago, Pakistan now tries to make a virtue of it. It does not want to give up its nuclear weapons material stockpile, it just doesn't want anyone (read India) to have a larger one. Within the country, however, dark voices have already begun to mutter about whether there is sufficient weapons usable material, with the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee recommending the cap on enrichment before a fissile material cut-off enters into force.

It could be expected that India would support Pakistan's position, and demand that the nuclear stocks of the nuclear powers be reduced dramatically. The only difference would be for India to demand that 'the lowest possible level' be amounts of material comparable to what it has, rather than what Pakistan has. India would then have parity, at least by this measure, with the nuclear weapons states. But India does not want to discuss stockpiles at all.

One reason may be that everyone expects an FMCO to take years to be negotiated, much longer than the talks over the CTBT. During this time, India may intend to accumulate enough weapons grade material to be able to have an arsenal comparable, in numbers if not sophistication, say with the smaller nuclear weapons states. In which case, unlike with the CTBT, an FMCO that does not reduce stockpiles would leave its capabilities where it wants them. The treaty would discriminate in favour of India rather than against, and that is a situation in which India, like the other nuclear states, finds to be an acceptable state of affairs.

Irrespective of whether the nuclear weapons states, and India, have their way, the FMCO will not take the disarmament agenda materially further. It will, like the CTBT, be a normative agreement – a recognition that nuclear materials are bad and countries should not make them. This is because it will not address the questions raised by the obvious fact that once the production of any kind of uranium enrichment is permitted, it can easily (within a few weeks) be enriched some more and turned into material that can be used to make bombs. Or the fact that almost any kind of plutonium can be used to make an atomic bomb, even reactor grade plutonium – the U.S. once carried out a nuclear explosion using such material.

As a consequence, the existence of nuclear facilities handling fissile materials from making low-enriched uranium for certain types of nuclear reactors to reprocessing of nuclear fuel that produces separated plutonium and fast breeder reactors that produce even more plutonium means that there will be an abundant supply of potential weapons-usable fissile material for anyone that wants to do a little work and build a bomb. Proliferation will be in slow motion. But, the nuclear weapons powers will sue it to feed their fears, and thus their arguments for why they must keep their nuclear weapons.

The lessons from the CTBT and the probable outcome of the FMCO are stark. The elites in South Asia have bought into the nuclear ruling class sensibilities about nuclear security, and will not give their nuclear weapons. Putting their illusions behind them, those people and those states that are sincere about disarmament must abandon piecemeal and linked solutions. Instead, they should ask for a simple, unequivocal ban on all nuclear weapons and act accordingly.

International negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention are being put on the agenda around the world.

Disarmers, or abolitionists as some prefer to call themselves, are growing in numbers, organising themselves and gaining support from surprising quarters: former nuclear weapons-designers, war-planners, and even generals have started to speak out in favour of a nuclear weapons-free world.

The idea of a Nuclear Weapons Convention is based on the recent experience of the abolition of biological and chemical weapons. Biological weapons were banned by the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention and about 130 countries have signed so far. This Convention bans the development, production, and stockpiling of dangerous biological materials for anything other than 'peaceful activities'.

Similarly, there is a Chemical Weapons Convention. It was opened for signature in 1993, and about 160 countries have signed so far. This is an even stricter convention than the one for biological weapons; it bans the development, production, possession and use of chemical weapons and has created the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to make sure that no country cheats on its commitments.

This approach can be applied to nuclear weapons. Countries must negotiate a convention to ban the development, production, possession and use of nuclear weapons. But rather than just raise the demand for talks leading to a Nuclear Weapons Convention at the United Nations General Assembly, or the Conference on Disarmament, and watch it stall as the U.S. leads the nuclear pack against it, a new source of pressure needs to be brought to bear.

This pressure is there, and growing. South Africa has shown that a country which built nuclear weapons can give them up. States in the former Soviet Union had nuclear weapons on their territory, but gave them up rather than become nuclear weapons states in their own right. There is an increasing number of nuclear weapons free zones, each of which is more restrictive in what it allows in the way of nuclear activity – the new Africa nuclear free zone commits its signatories 'not to conduct research on, develop, manufacture, stockpile or otherwise acquire, possess or have control over any explosive device by any means anywhere'.

In South Asia, India and Pakistan claim not to have nuclear weapons, they have nothing to give up. In fact, the nuclear programmes in both countries are 'peaceful', as the leaders of these countries never tire of pointing out. A South Asian nuclear weapons free zone has made no progress and both refuse to sign international treaties. What can citizens demand from them?

One straightforward demand is that since each country claims to be opposed to nuclear weapons, it should incorporate its commitment to the peaceful uses of nuclear science into its constitution. This is not a new idea, but an idea whose time has come. Brazil has already adopted it. It gave up a secret nuclear weapons programme, and changed its constitution to specifically ban military nuclear activity. The Brazilian constitution now states 'all nuclear activity in the natural territory will only he admitted for peaceful purposes'. Until nuclear weapons are abolished they should at least be made illegal.

Making nuclear weapons unthinkable is more difficult than just making them illegal. It means taking them out of the categories of weapons, science, technology and strategy and putting them into a social category. Nuclear weapons as an idea refer to a relationship between people based upon inducing fear by the use of threats of unlimited destruction. How to handle such a category, which is clearly unacceptable, can be seen by comparing it, say, with the category of slavery. No one would suggest slavery be reformed nor does any country make the abolition of slavery conditional on it being abolished everywhere else, even though slavery may make economics more efficient. It is simply abolished in each country, often in the face of resistance from massive vested interests, but in time is accepted by everyone that it was indeed immoral.

The quality of 'expert' advice

BHARAT KARNAD

A STOCKHOLM International Peace Research Institute Study, doing the rounds here in its draft form, baldly states that the public support for India's defence policies, while vocal, is uninformed.

'Vocal but uninformed' also aptly describes the generally gung-ho tone of statements by the political leadership cutting across party lines, and of newspaper editorials and press commentaries which greeted India's recent decision to take no further part in the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations in Geneva.

But even more worrying is the fact that acknowledged pundits on military matters and experts on foreign policy too seem to be treading water in their understanding not so much of the mechanics of the CTBT talks or of the attendant arcana – concepts like effect-in-force, negative security assurances, verification regimes and so on – but of whether the shortsighted, ill thought-out, nuclear policy of 'keeping our options open' has not reached a dead-end. Are we not now complicit in the last rites being performed in Geneva over this country's sovereign right to choose the only means currently available to ensure near absolute security of the kind enjoyed only by those countries which possess nuclear weapons?

The Indian CTBT strategy, as articulated by these experts, rests less on the harsh and unforgiving military reality staring us in the face in the here and now, than on a long ago diplomatic coup which failed but the wellsprings of which they have yet to understand. I am referring to the inspired posturing in the 1950s by India – a large, militarily ineffective, and beggarly country – which cannily sought to compensate for its lack of real clout with 'moral' heft gained by leading a crusade against atomic weapons.

Jawaharlal Nehru's attempt, riding the strong world-wide anti-Bomb sentiment at the time, to lever atomic weapons out of the hands of the Hiroshima guilt-ridden West with the help of a comprehensive test ban treaty mooted by him in Geneva in 1954 – which brought him and the country centre-stage – would have been an extraordinary diplomatic coup had it succeeded. It did not, at least in part because by then an alarmed Washington (which, in a fit of do-gooding, mooted the so-called Baruch Plan that sought to bring the U.S. and Soviet nuclear programmes under international control, and saw the measure being negatived by the Soviet Union) quickly perceived in these weapons a counterpoise to the overwhelming conventional military superiority of the Communist bloc which it could never hope to match, and a means of ensuring durable peace in Europe and the world. The absence of a 'Great War' in the last 50 years suggests that this latter 'realist' school of thought was not far wrong either in its premises or in its conclusions.

But, the headiness of this near success crippled New Delhi's thinking not only about nuclear weapons and disarmament, but also on the larger subject of national security, giving rise to a mess of inchoate notions – to call it 'policy' would be to dignify it – that have over the years eroded the country's sovereignty and its freedom of action in foreign policy and defence and security spheres.

The perhaps opportunistic thinking (a phrase herein used to describe a desirable, even necessary, quality in diplomacy) that begat Nehru's campaign to rid the earth of the atomic menace and simultaneously to detach the Big Powers from their prime means of coercion at a time when India was vulnerable and not similarly armed, was a superior gambit to turn national weakness into virtue, but it has never been so acknowledged. Dyed-in-the-wool Nehruites in and out of government still refuse to consider that Jawaharlal, the only person so far to bring a classical historian's sensibility to the office of the prime minister, may have been motivated at least as much by *realpolitik* considerations as by idealism in making his favourite pitch on disarmament.

Those, in any case, were the initial years of the atomic era when the military significance of nuclear weapons was only thinly grasped. Nehru, devoid of interest and seldom given to cogitating on military matters, may be forgiven for failing to think through the implications for India's security of the universal nuclear disarmament idea he was propagating. But, what is the excuse for generations of Indian strategic analysts *not* to do so? And what was the reason for the Foreign Office to promote the 1989 Rajiv Gandhi Plan for Disarmament, other than Natwar Singh and Mani Shankar Aiyar's pushing it as an opportunity for the prime minister to grandstand? Or, more recently, why the hurtful efforts, like Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's joining President Bill Clinton to support a fissile material treaty targeted at India?

The answers suggest that (*i*) in the strategic community at large, there is a deep-rooted reluctance to question the official policy on its fundamentals, (*ii*) the Armed Services and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) are not any more adventurous in this respect, and (*iii*) in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), with cutting edge responsibility in this field, there is an overarching concern with preserving Nehruvian values in foreign policy, resulting in an inadequate, if not an entirely flawed, appreciation of nuclear weapons as 'currency of power' in international relations.

Hardly astonishing, therefore, that there has been no substantive change in policy since the fifties and no support for nuclear weaponisation, even though (*i*) India long ago acquired the technological capabilities to sustain such a programme, and (*ii*) the progressively darkening geo-strategic threat picture has, for some time now, demanded such a radical change in course. Nor, for that matter, is there a change in the formulation, whether at the CTBT or other forums, to indicate that India will, in pursuance of its hoary objective, act forcefully – not excluding wrecking the proceedings in Geneva, for instance, to realize total disarmament which aim, I have argued elsewhere, centrally hurts India's national security interests.

It appears as if India's nuclear policymakers and opinion-leaders – traditionally faint-hearted, intellectually thrombotic and, when not easily frightened by vague and unmaintainable threats of economic pressures and political reprisals held out by the nuclear weapon powers, seduced by the recently discovered glitter of the global marketplace and the promises of high technology, capital, credit and whatnot – have developed a stake in mistaking what is politically safe for what is militarily desirable in the strategic context. They are consequently bent on making the country's policy do the impossible, namely, cook the proverbial omlette without breaking eggs. It is another matter that the present policy they champion may well end up cooking India's goose.

The director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), funded by the MEA, is usually *au fait* with the latest wrinkles in government thinking on all national security-related matters, liaising on a regular basis with policymakers in South Block and in the Services Head Quarters. In return for allowing him access, using him as a sounding board and generally keeping him in the know of whatever action is being contemplated in official circles, the director is required to float trial balloons to gauge public reaction, play point-man to draw flak, and otherwise to help fine-tune and 'sell' the agreed upon policy at home and abroad. In this set-up, the director's own ideas also occasionally become grist for the policy mill.

What K. Subrahmanyam, former director, IDSA, sometime Secretary for Defence Production and now a prolific column writer and newspaper editorialist, and his deputy and successor at the Institute, Air Commodore (retd.) Jasjit Singh, say or write can, therefore, clue us in many instances to this or that policy in the offing. Indeed, their newspaper articles anticipated India's moves in the CTBT talks to a remarkable degree. The Government of India's decision to opt out of the negotiations in Geneva and the date on which the Committee on Disarmament was so informed were in fact intimated in Subrahmanyam's column of 13 June (Economic Times) and in Jasjit Singh's piece of 16 June (Hindustan Times) respectively. So, Subrahmanyam and Jasjit Singh's writings may be seen as bell-weather of official thinking.

Gleaned from their writings over many years, the following in a succinct form are the main lines of the Subrahmanyam-Jasjit Singh thesis, which by and large is supportive of the government's long-standing Do Nothing policy geared towards total disarmament – the policy of 'keeping our options open', that the two have loyally stuck to and embroidered over the years:

1. Total nuclear disarmament, very good, very good; proliferation, very bad, very bad. This contention requires that a

fundamental question be answered satisfactorily which they haven't done because they haven't addressed it! Namely, whether India's security is helped or hurt by nuclear weapons and by total disarmament. But the Subrahmanyam-Singh combo has never tackled this issue head on. Instead, they have assumed that nuclear weapons are *ipso facto* bad and a world without them will be a more peaceful world and, by extension, one safer from India's point of view. Jasjit Singh says precisely this (Hindustan Times, 16 June 1996): 'A CTBT linked to disarmament in an unambiguous way would have been worth giving up the option to test in future.'

Further, he describes the 'core issue' of the comprehensive test ban talks as being whether 'a good CTBT' will emerge out of the deliberations in Geneva and goes on to say: 'The most fundamental basis for judging this...the core issue' is 'that a non-nuclear environment is a critical necessity in our national security interests' adding that nuclear weapons in the neighbourhood have placed India 'in an adverse asymmetry which constrains our ability to deal with political and strategic issues from a position of equality....'

This, of course, is to stand the nuclear imperative on its head. No one stopped India from weaponizing to match the Chinese nuclear build-up in the sixties and seventies and thus correcting the 'asymmetry' and attaining equality with the nuclear weapon states except ourselves for the very reason of an utterly wrong prognosis of the political and military utility of nuclear armaments of the kind that the Air Commodore has all along propagated.

But what asymmetry? Subrahmanyam bends over backwards not to 'blame' China for its pell-mell nuclearizing effort because he explains (Economic Times, 13 June 1996) 'it is reacting to the U.S. hegemonism'. No mention here that China's nuclear military forces centrally imperil this country and that India needs likewise to 'react' to Chinese expansionism. Apparently, the *Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai* spirit is robustly shared by the leaders of the Indian strategic community, India's national security interests be damned!

Let me here reprise the arguments made by me recently ('Nuclear disarmament: in national interest?', Hindustan Times, 10 July 1996) because this is the first time, if I am not mistaken, that the case has been made that India will face greater peril and incur far higher defence expenditures in a nuclear disarmed world, than it does now. This to alert the intelligentsia to the fact that nuclear disarmament may not be exactly a boon they have been led to believe it is and to point out a basic area of research that Subrahmanyam and Jasjit Singh haven't touched.

India, I argued, made a horrific mistake in (*i*) conceptually twinning the ideas of 'peace and security' and 'disarmament', (*ii*) acquiescing in the separation of the nuclear and conventional military disarmament streams in world forums, and (*iii*) sticking by our supposedly 'principled and moral stand' on nuclear weapons which in essence has led India to abjuring the nuclear option so far.

My argument stated that for a pivotal but impoverished country like India, nuclear weapons of whatever quality would have provided deterrent defence on the cheap for all time to come against even the most advanced and predatory countries, and that in a denuclearized milieu India would be forced to go in for the economically ruinous course of continually upgrading its conventional military forces to keep pace with the conventionally sophisticated militaries of the Big Powers.

Further, I described the present Indian policy of 'keeping our options open' as 'not sensible... in the main because an option can be kept open for only so long before it becomes irrelevant or worse' and that 'India's strategic weapons policy generally' was nearing that point in time when it would get 'reduced to mindless iteration, like the Cheshire Cat in Alice's Wonderland fading to little more than an optimistic grin'.

I concluded by observing, not unreasonably, that 'History shows that no implement of war has ever been discarded except to be replaced by a deadlier instrument, by which reckoning nuclear weapons are here to stay until something more lethal comes along.' It will, therefore, be more prudent, I cautioned, for India 'to face the uncertainties of a seemingly turbulent future by speedily acquiring nuclear weapons than to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of disarmament'.

2. Sufficient weaponizing data was collected (both in terms of warhead design and delivery vehicle configuration) from just the one-off 1974 Pokharan nuclear test for India now to strategize and warplan on the basis of Minimum Deterrence. This is a parboiled fact at best and a truth only if you accept that the Pokharan test data has provided Indian scientists and engineers with near complete knowledge of explosion physics adequate to weaponize even to the extent of 60 odd warheads claimed by SIPRI, *et al.* This raises the question of the quality of the warhead and its detonated performance (mainly yield-to-weight ratio) in the absence of subsequent tests to verify the first data and so on.

Neither Subrahmanyam nor Jasjit Singh can speak authoritatively on the value of nuclear testing, not being weapons designers. So let me relate the views of one who is. Edward Teller, along with Stanislaw Ulam, 'the father of the hydrogen bomb', writing in the early 1960s said that extensive nuclear tests had improved the effectiveness of the nuclear weapons (of the Polaris-type) then in the American inventory a thousand-fold over the Hiroshima-Nagasaki generation of bombs. Moreover, that continued testing would enable the follow-on generation of weapons (the Poseidon-class warhead, now in American and NATO orders-of-battle) to be four times as effective as the Polaris-type! Such Factors of Difference are considered trivial by Subrahmanyam and Jasjit Singh but by Teller's method of reckoning a minimum of 25 nuclear tests would be required for India to be confident of its 1974-level nuclear weapons capability.

3. India, in the event, should declare itself a nuclear weapon power and begin behaving as a nuclear Have and make common cause with the other Haves against the Have-nots on issues such as nuclear non-proliferation, technology denial schemes, like the Missile Technology Control Regime and so on. Thus, Subrahmanyam, for one, has recommended that India adhere to the London Group (an informal club of nuclear suppliers) guidelines, subscribe to the MTCR, and agree to a fissile missile treaty, thus surrendering what residual leverage India has as mischief-maker to wrench concessions from the NWS.

4. And, use India's *de facto* weapons status to pressure the nuclear weapon states into committing themselves to denuclearise their arsenals in return for New Delhi's signing of the CTBT. That's how they analytically close the circle!

As is readily evident, it is easy to pick gaping holes in this argument, easier still to mock India's lack of policy and the lamentable position it has managed to get into, and easiest of all to satirize Messrs. Subrahmanyam, Jasjit Singh, *et al*'s views rationalizing, justifying, validating and legitimizing the extant state of affairs reflecting minimal thought and maximal confusion passing off as policy. It may be said of the SS (Subrahmanyam-Singh) school of nuclear policy thought, for instance, that it represents the wishful thinking of a decrepit and impecunious Walter Mitty-like character who seeks to be counted among the elite on the basis of a chest he lugs around containing mysterious wherewithal which he claims can make him the equal of the richest and the most powerful of men anywhere! In Subrahmanyam and Jasjit's case that chest happens to be India's one test wonder nuclear weapons capability! But let their own words do the talking.

Jasjit Singh, using a declamatory tone favoured by his mentor, Subrahmanyam, and our media commentators generally rather than hard analysis, states magisterially (The Indian Express, 11 June 1996) that a non-nuclear weapon world serves our 'fundamental interests'. What these fundamental interests are, or how and why they are thus served is nowhere explained, not in this article nor anywhere else in his writings. Neither has Subrahmanyam in all his prolixity dealt with this fairly elementary aspect. In other words, this declaration, in their estimation, is in the genre of self-evident truths that require no proof.

Although recognizing the fact that nuclear weapon states – unobliging boors that they are – will probably pass up the golden opportunity of enhancing 'global peace and security' and collaterally serving New Delhi's 'national security goals', the Air Commodore, a much decorated Gnat fighter pilot, all the same urges the government to persist in working towards total disarmament. Until that state of grace is reached, he counsels a minimum deterrent posture, comprising 10-40 kiloton yield weapons slaved to a 5,500 km range missile or aircraft, already acquired or within our ability to acquire, it isn't clear which. He goes on to posit this level of weaponisation as 'necessary' and 'anything above this level' as 'desirable'.

Jasjit Singh then goes one better on Subrahmanyam. While Subrahmanyam said that the Pokharan explosion has equipped the country's weapons labs to engineer a 600 kg weight implosion-triggered weapon in the shape of a warhead atop a missile or in the form of a free-fall gravity bomb, Jasjit asserts that even untested nuclear weapons will do fine as deterrent, because the 'Thin Man' and the 'Fat Boy' bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were untested.

Jasjit Singh also maintains that, given the present state of technological attainment, it would be perfectly prudent for India to barter its signature on a CTBT for a firm commitment by the nuclear powers – which amounts to little more than a promise, actually – to eliminate their weapon stockpiles. Yea, right! If you believe in such promises, perhaps you'd care to buy a certain Taj Mahal I have standing in Agra!

Subrahmanyam has recommended that India continue to hew to the present Do Nothing policy, because he says it is Gandhian, non-belligerent and eschews extremes and represents what he calls 'the middle path' (Economic Times, 27 June 1996) – a phrase that Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao used to describe his government's economic reforms policy in Davos last year. Specifically on the negotiating tactics to be adopted in the CTBT forum, he has opined (Economic Times, 13 June 1996) that 'Staying out of the treaty on security grounds is a far more powerful act of resistance than protesting against it on the grounds of absence of disarmament linkage.' He can be faulted on many grounds, not the least being his questionable understanding of India's prerogatives, like the power of veto, under international law owing to its charter membership in the UN-empowered Committee on Disarmament.

The fact is by not choosing to veto the proceedings in Geneva at a number of points in the negotiations on procedural grounds – as when the U.S. imposed a 28 June deadline extended to 29 July for the negotiations to end, and when the Chairman of the Committee on Disarmament, Jaap Ramaker, arbitrarily replaced the original 'rolling text' containing mention of hundreds of differing views on crucial points in the draft treaty which would have required protracted talks to iron out, with his so-called 'clean text' as the basis for a final CTB treaty – India may have boxed itself into a corner. And on 21 June by deciding to opt out of the talks, New Delhi may have compounded its troubles. This may be an act of resistance, but a futile one because should the U.S. and other nuclear powers sink their differences and accept the American undertaking to proceed with realizing some form of a draft treaty and leave it to Washington to pressurize India later, the game is as good as lost.

The U.S. Government has indicated that with the treaty being open for signature in the UN General Assembly, it is sure to get a two-thirds majority to give this document the force of international law. This will then be used to browbeat a quivering New Delhi with the threat of trade and economic sanctions.

his is a powerful tool Washington is shioning to beat India with and all that ubrahmanyam and his ilk are trying to o is to lull the country into thinking that e chestnuts can still be pulled out of e fire without the country singeing its ands; that is, without having to take the vert nuclear weapons route.

Then again, the likes of Subrah-anyam and Jasjit Singh rely on the pport of ex-diplomats, like, say, N Dixit, who presumably know the uances of international politicking validate their case. And the latter rdly ever disappoint. Dixit (Indian xpress, 18 June 1996), for instance, gues against blocking the CTBT nego-ations in Geneva (which he implies dia can do by wielding its veto; ubrahmanyam, by the way, is convinced at in the Geneva forum because consen-s is required, not unanimity, India is reft of the veto power) because of the nger of India getting politically 'iso-ted'. It is altogether surprising that ixit should hold that in this intensely terlinked modern day world that we e plugged into India *can* be isolated. In ny case, perhaps Dixit should mull ver whether there are worse things that n happen to this country than its being olated on the CTBT issue, and if that's l the price to pay, whether it isn't nall change.

But there's a distinct parting of ways. ubrahmanyam *et al* ultimately rely on hat they are convinced is a credible, ilitarized nuclear weapons force (a rew driver's turn away or whatever) in dia's employ. Dixit and the rest of the oreign Office cabal put their money on n open option, which in Dixit's rendition f India's case translates into emphasis n 'tactical adroitness' which he recom-ends in lieu of 'futile defiance'.

Professional proclivities being hat they are, little else could have been xpected from a former Foreign Secretary ho is, perhaps, rather too persuaded by e idea of diplomacy as sum total of droit manoeuvres! But what happens, as India's case, when there is manifestly o room for manoeuvre? Were it that clever diplomatic moves alone would solve the grave military problem faced by India's staying determinedly non-nuclear in an unsettled world of predatory nuclear powers.

With the sort of disarray in strategic thinking reflected in the positions of Subrahmanyam, Jasjit Singh and Dixit, it is easy to see why the errant nonsense (Economic Times, 17 June 1996) espoused by disarmers-at-all-cost, like Praful Bidwai, gets some play. Of course, it is another matter that these 'useful idiots' (to use Lenin's phrase for the likes of the American trader and capitalist, Armand Hammer, willing to help the newly founded USSR to gain economic strength) – useful to nuclear weapon states, that is – are keen that India renounces atomic armaments.

A strong refutation of the Bidwai-esque claptrap has been offered by the doyen amongst Indian science and technology correspondents in the press, R. Ramachandran (Economic Times, 6 June and 20 June 1996). But, even Ramachandran eventually falls back on the opinions of retired General K. Sundarji about India's covert weapon capabilities to buttress his view that the country has enough nuclear powder kept dry to deter all comers and ought, therefore, to stick to the present policy! If our chiefs of staff, essentially conventional warfare experts, are to be considered crypto-nuclear warriors, then there is good reason to treat the contrary view of, say, Admiral JG Nadkarni (letters, Indian Express, 20 June), with equal respect. Nadkarni, for example, suggests that it is high time India jettisoned its 'nebulous' deterrence policy based on 'ambiguity' and openly 'demonstrated' its N-weapons capability by conducting nuclear tests.

There is little doubt that the Government of India as much as the Indian strategic community such as it is, have succumbed, by and large, to the indiscreet charms of a la-di-dah foreign-cum-military policy. Under the circumstances, can India's security prospects continue to fare, other than badly?

Does public opinion matter?

AMITABH MATTOO

REASONED public discussion of nuclear policy options is almost entirely lacking in India, which otherwise has a rich and vibrant democratic tradition of dialogue and debate. Until recently, not much emphasis was laid on nuclear policy in the media, in public forums, or in the two houses of Parliament – all of which seem otherwise preoccupied with domestic problems. India's nuclear policy has never been an issue in general elections, and even among nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), discussion of national security and nuclear issues is scarce. Only a handful of anti-nuclear organizations exist in a country of nearly one billion people, and only rarely has there been any popular mobilization on the subject. Not surprisingly, therefore, little is known about the attitudes and preferences of India's intelligentsia on vital issues of nuclear policy, nor is there any real role that public opinion plays on decision making on nuclear issues.

There is, admittedly, a steady stream of articles on the subject in quasi-official journals and a few newspapers. But this discourse is controlled almost entirely by a handful of scholars and former military and government officials, who, until recently, presented no more than a justification of official policy. Even these writers rarely provide a major input into policy formulation.

In the most comprehensive opinion survey (referred to, hereafter, as the 1994 survey) of elite views of nuclear issues[1] conducted in the autumn of 1994, only six per cent of the respondents considered the nuclear issue sufficiently urgent to be rated the first- or second-most important concern facing the country. Communalism, poverty, economic stability, terrorism, the conflict in Kashmir, and even the debate over the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) ranked above the nuclear issue for most respondents. The survey found substantial support for official policy. 57 per cent of those polled favoured New Delhi's policy of 'strategic ambiguity': maintaining the nuclear option while espousing global nuclear disarmament. 33 per cent were nuclear advocates, favouring weaponization and the outright acquisition of nuclear weapons capability. Only eight per cent supported the renunciation of a nuclear option for India.

Only slight variations were found in the views held by people in different occupational categories. Lawyers and business executives were more likely to be nuclear advocates, while members of the armed forces were less inclined to favour the nuclear option. Artists tended

1 See Amitabh Mattoo and David Cortright (eds) *India and the Bomb: Public Opinion and Nuclear Options*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1996

to be nuclear opponents. But these differences were small and insignificant. Men were less likely than women to be nuclear opponents, but the sample of female respondents was small (a reflection of the male dominance in Indian elite society) and a larger sample may have yielded more robust results. There were no effects of age or education on respondents' positions.

No sizable correlation existed between political party affiliation and views on nuclear policy, although some slight differences were noted. Supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the only national party that has publicly advocated the acquisition of nuclear weapons, were less inclined to be nuclear opponents and more likely to favour the nuclear option. Supporters of the Congress (I) were more likely to endorse official policy.

Not surprisingly, the idea of global nuclear disarmament has immense legitimacy and support among Indian elites. For all respondents, 92 per cent expressed total or partial support for an international agreement to ban nuclear weapons, with only one per cent opposed. Among supporters of official policy, 88 per cent indicated total support for the elimination of nuclear weapons, with an additional eight per cent expressing partial support, for a combined 96 per cent endorsement of nuclear abolition. Among nuclear advocates as well, support for a nuclear ban was widespread, with 91 per cent indicating full or partial support for a global disarmament agreement. Respondents also expressed confidence in the feasibility of such an agreement, with 62 per cent of all respondents believing that a global ban could be signed within 25 years. Among supporters of official policy, 65 per cent felt that an elimination treaty could be signed within this timeline. 53 per cent of nuclear advocates agreed. Among nuclear opponents, 80 per cent considered a nuclear ban feasible within 25 years.

In the past, nuclear issues have assumed real public significance mostly because of extraordinary external events or a perception of external pressure. Government policy, at least in its public posturing, has almost always hardened as a consequence. Three instances are worth citing. The only real debate on India's nuclear options took place in the months after China tested its nuclear device at the Lop Nor test site in Sinkiang in October 1964. Distinguished economists, political leaders, and social activists participated in the discussion. It is widely believed that it was during this critical period that Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri gave the green signal to the Atomic Energy Commission to pursue the nuclear weapons option. Significantly, the 1994 survey revealed that 48 per cent of the supporters of government policy identified a future Pakistani nuclear test as the most important factor justifying development of nuclear weapons.

In the recent past, one of the few occasions on which India's parliament has discussed the nuclear issue was in March and April 1994. This was when Indian news reports revealed that a team of Indian officials (led by N. Krishnan, formerly the country's permanent representative to the UN) were holding 'secret' talks on the nuclear issue in London with a U.S. delegation led by Robert Einhorn, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the State Department's political-military bureau. Opposition members of parliament seeking an adjournment motion claimed that India was bowing to U.S. pressure to cap its nuclear programme and/or sign the NPT. One MP described it as a 'disgrace and humiliation' while another suggested that Prime Minister Narasimha Rao should cancel his scheduled visit to the United States in May.

The Government of India was clearly on the defensive, but maintained that the two-day discussions were part of an on-going series and were attempting principally to work out the modalities of proposed multilateral talks on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia. The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs told the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Indian parliament, that 'India will not make any compromise under any pressure.' Although Rao's government weathered the storm, the incident made it clear that any significant non-proliferation measure undertaken would be accompanied by political backlash, especially if the decision was seen to have been taken under external pressure.

The most recent example of heightened public concern was in the wake of renewed U.S. pressure following the extension of the NPT in May 1995. The recommendations made at a seminar on 'External Pressures on India's Nuclear Options' (which included the *creme de la creme* of India's strategic thinkers, including serving officials) held in September 1995, revealed the direction that this public debate was taking, even before the recent Indian stand on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The seminar recommended that (*i*) India should oppose the CTBT and a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) unless, in a time-bound framework, they are explicitly made part of total and comprehensive disarmament; (*ii*) that India's policy of 'keeping the nuclear option open' had become meaningless and there was need now to examine how best to translate this into effective deterrence; (*iii*) India's current capabilities can take care of Pakistan but not the other larger challenges. And, therefore, even in case India decides not to resume nuclear testing it must continue developing longer range delivery systems. Although this strategic community, well known as it is, has in the short term no direct impact on government policy, it could carry influence in the long term.

Significantly, this shift in public attitudes was also revealed in a survey of popular opinion in December 1995. Although the nuclear issue still ranked below communalism, poverty, unemployment and the Kashmir problem, 43 per cent of the respondents were more inclined to support a political party that would ensure that India would have nuclear weapons. 26 per cent were less inclined to support such a part, and to 31 per cent it would make no difference. Moreover, 62 per cent would 'approve'

if India exploded an nuclear bomb to develop its nuclear-weapon capability.

There are, therefore, at least two conclusions that can drawn about public opinion. First, in ordinary times, the nuclear issue is a non-issue. It has virtually no bearing on elections, nor does it rank high in salience. There is no great support for weaponization at such times, but overwhelming support to retain the option. The government has in these times considerable flexibility and room for manoeuvre and can make significant changes in its policy, short of giving up or 'eroding' the nuclear option. Second, there is a dramatic shift in favour of weaponization if there is a perception that external pressure is being imposed or if an extraordinary external event takes place that is viewed as a national security threat. The government has considerably less flexibility at such times and could, in the face of severe public pressure, be forced to review its policy.

Decision-making on nuclear issues in India is complex and it is obscurity which is the defining quality. There is no agency or department that is solely responsible for co-ordinating policy formulation on key security issues including the nuclear one. No White Paper has ever been published on India's nuclear policy nor does there seem to be a secret strategy on the basis of which specific policies are executed. A critically acclaimed essay by George Tanham, a Rand corporation analyst, suggested that 'Indian elites show little evidence of having thought coherently and systematically about national strategy.' His thesis found a powerful backer in one of India's best known contemporary strategic thinkers, K. Subrahmanyam (a former Secretary of Defence Production in the Government of India), who argued that 'the absence of strategic tradition has resulted in ad-hocism all around'.

In the recent past moves have been made to set up a National Security Council but none has been established so far. In 1990, the government under Prime Minister V.P. Singh almost set up such a Council but finally backed out. During the 1996 election campaign Prime Minister Rao promised to set up a council if he was reelected, but it is unlikely that such a council – even if established – will exercise much authority. In the absence of a Council, the Prime Minister's Office remains the vortex of policy formulation. Indeed, it is the Prime Minister's Office which is virtually the only permanent link between the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), responsible for furthering India's nuclear programme, and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), principally responsible for India's disarmament diplomacy. There is little direct communication between the AEC and the MEA, and to complicate issues further, the two agencies are sceptical and often distrustful of each other.

The MEA is particularly wary because the AEC shares little information with it about the actual state of the country's nuclear programme. As in many other countries, decisions regarding India's nuclear programme have always been taken in absolute secrecy by a handful of individuals. The chairman of India's AEC, for instance, has the absolute power to initiate, formulate, plan and execute India's nuclear programme in total secrecy and is responsible in practice only to the Prime Minister. All Prime Ministers have also been Cabinet Ministers for Atomic Energy. In addition, under section 18 (i) of India's Atomic Energy Act of 1962, the government has the power to restrict the disclosure of information in any form that relates to an existing or proposed plant used for producing, developing, or using atomic energy.

While critics have referred to this nuclear decision-making process as 'scientific and political czarism', or as a virtual 'nuclear sub-government', what is really significant is that few non-scientists other than the Prime Minister know the exact state of the country's nuclear programme. In the recent past, there is reported to have been some in-fighting within the AEC between nuclear scientists and nuclear engineers but this has surprisingly not led to any 'whistle blowers' or 'leaks' to the media.

Decisions on India's disarmame diplomacy are more democratic but als more complex.

The MEA is vested with the autho ity to shape and formulate this policy an the upper hierarchy of the Ministry manned almost totally by officers draw from the prestigious Indian Foreign Se vice (IFS). Indeed, there is a separa Disarmament Division within the mini try and, until recently, an IFS officer, wi the reputation of being one of India leading disarmament experts, headed t division. The Permanent Representativ of India to the Conference on Disarm ment and to the United Nations are alwa senior IFS officers with a wealth of di lomatic experience behind them and a often in the running for the top positic of Foreign Secretary. The Cabinet Mi ister of External Affairs and the juni ministers have been, barring a few notab exceptions, keenly interested in foreig affairs and especially in India's policy disarmament.

Although the MEA has function autonomy, real authority even on cruci disarmament issues is vested in t Prime Minister's Office. The matter further complicated because at any giv time there are two or three IFS office seconded to the Prime Minister's Offic all of whom exercise authority often excess of their seniority in the service. F instance, one of the Private Secretaries former Prime Minister Rao was an offic of the IFS and there was at least one oth senior officer from the service second to the office. While the first policy nc on disarmament policy usually emanat from within the specialist division in t MEA, decisions on crucial issues are us ally taken within the Prime Ministe Office. Only in exceptional situations h government set up broad-based panels advise it on nuclear issues.

There are two instances from t recent past. The first was in 1990 duri the nuclear crisis. This is particula interesting because after American jou nalist Seymour Hersh broke the sto about the crisis in March 1993, top of cials in both India and Pakistan deni

that there had ever been such a crisis. Just over two years later, however, in April 1995, a retired Indian official (who had occupied a top government position during the 1990 crisis) disclosed that the Government of India had indeed taken seriously the possibility of a Pakistani nuclear strike and had even set up a task force to study the dimensions of this threat and recommend appropriate responses.

Also, in March 1993 in the wake of U.S. pressure on non-proliferation issues, the government appointed an Eminent Persons Group to examine various policy options available to India in the nuclear field and to help choose the one most suited to the present-day security and political environment. The Group included serving and retired official of the AEC and other official and non-official experts. The Group's recommendations have not been made public, nor is it known whether the government has acted on its recommendations.

There are five conclusions that can be drawn about India's decision-making on nuclear issues. First, there is no grand strategy on the basis of which India's nuclear programme or disarmament diplomacy is being executed. Second, the scientific establishment operates with little political or bureaucratic interference and decisions are principally made by technocrats. The AEC functions autonomously in sanitized conditions, removed from the turbulence of Indian or international politics, and is zealously pursuing the development of India's nuclear programme. Third, routine decisions on India's disarmament diplomacy are made within the Ministry of External affairs. Like most bureaucracies, the MEA is conservative and slow, with fixed ideas and well-entrenched positions. It is unlikely to shift ground rapidly nor is it likely to make rash or quick decisions. Fourth, final authority is vested in the person and the office of the Prime Minister.

However, only a strong, decisive and stable Prime Minister would take a decision unpopular with the AEC or the MEA. Finally, be that as it may, speedy decisions could be made in a crisis situation or when the country is facing external pressure.

Indian security and the nuclear question

ACHIN VANAIK

SIX kinds of people have made up what can be called the 'strategic community' or 'national security establishment' of India. Whether active or retired, these are the soldier, diplomat, bureaucrat, politician, the policy-oriented academic and journalist. Some might be tempted to add a seventh category – the scientist. But though the odd scientist in a very senior position has had important access to, and powerful influence on, certain key decision-makers, scientists generally have not figured in the public debate (or private discussion) on strategic matters in the same way as prominent members of the other six occupations. These are our 'strategic experts'.

What is common to all is their significantly greater proximity to the apparatuses and personnel of state power when compared to even the average member of the Indian elite, leave aside the ordinary Indian. Even the latter two occupations of journalist and academic who should in theory be more autonomous of state power are rarely, if ever so, because the desire to be 'policy-relevant' pushes them to think in ways common to the strategic community as a whole. How else are they to influence the powers that be as much as they want to? This way of thinking has a technical label which in the language of the academic discipline of International Relations is called Political Realism.

Most devotees of this brand of thinking do not even know that this is just one brand or paradigm of thinking about international relations or strategic security or national security matters. They believe this way of thinking is obvious and universal common sense. The few who do

possess some awareness that there are various paradigms of thinking about international relations, have only the most cursory familiarity with other approaches and are generally quite incapable of self-consciously or objectively analysing the enormous limitations of the paradigm to which they have, rather unfortunately, committed their professional lives and public reputations.

In this respect the range and depth of *thinking about strategic thinking* in India is far more backward than in some other countries like Britain, France, Sweden, Germany, and even the USA where Political Realism remains easily the hegemonic form of discourse. There, the recognition of the existence of variant approaches has led not only to a more sophisticated debate on strategic security/international relations but also to a stronger awareness among people that strategic expertise is a very hard won accomplishment requiring considerable multi-disciplinary skills and endeavours. In fact, only good macro-history or good sociology can compare with good international relations thinking in the multi-disciplinary demands that are made. At a minimum, the strategic or international relations expert should make a serious effort to develop some significant grounding in historical sociology, international political economy, political science, ethical philosophy, social psychology, as well as some degree of competence in area studies, law and conventional international relations thinking.

Instead, the mind-set of the average Indian strategic expert is little more than a complacent amalgam of current affairs knowledge, internalised axioms of an ahistorical kind about the supposedly enduring realities of power (like 'there are no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests' or 'we must be guided by capabilities not intentions'), and reasonable familiarity with political-diplomatic-military history of a very conventional and positivist kind. This equips our experts to be 'state managers or advisers' who have a more or less useful *operational* view of foreign policy conduct and behaviour, but little else. They suffer from the deep delusion that they have a serious worldview (they don't even come close to this) and that they are practical, realistic, responsible and experienced people in whose hands matters of national security can be more or less safely entrusted.

On the nuclear question it is precisely this mind-set (worldwide) that has been responsible for landing the world in the mess we are in. It is a nuclear mind-set that has to be attacked and rejected if we are to succeed in bringing about a nuclear-free world. When the anti-nuclear peace movements said that nuclear security was too serious a matter to be left in the hands of the so-called nuclear or strategic experts this was not just a slogan carrying a moral comment but a profoundly intellectual and political criticism as well.

This mind-set then, is a pretty feeble foundation indeed if the project of seriously rethinking matters concerning Indian security is to take off. As we move into the 21st century, old ways of thinking will not do if we are to meet some of the most fundamental challenges to security/national security that are likely to be thrown up: deepening socio-economic inequalities, global ecological imbalances, the adverse implications of bio-technology on agriculture-related activities and lives, population-migration pressures, the resurgence of culturally exclusivist political movements centred on ethnicity, religion, nation or combinations thereof.

But India's strategic community has an understanding of security matters that unsurprisingly (given its composition) is strongly state-centric, highly elitist and excessively outward-oriented. Time and again, state security is the acceptable stand-in for the notion of national security or seen as its crucial anchor. Only rarely do our experts pose fundamental questions about the very nature of the state or of notions of state or national security or national interest. Who defines the latter? By what right do they do so? Can they do so correctly? Except in the rarest of cases is there even such a thing as national interest?

Such complexities are prevented from intruding into the mind of the average expert through a conceptual sleight of hand which is so effective that the trick is usually unseen. For the purposes of so-called strategic discourse, our experts resort to a notion of the state that is effectively synonymous with the national territory. In Fred Halliday's apt phrase, the state is seen as a 'national-territorial totality'.[1] When our experts talk of national security or national interest they generally elide the distinction between the state and nation and use a geographic or map notion of the Indian state, not the more restricted sociological notion of the state as a distinct set of apparatuses both residing in, relatively insulated and partly overlapping with something outside and encompassing it, namely Indian society.

This conceptual elision of the fundamental differences and tensions between state and society works to *(a)* eliminate all the complexities referred to earlier when talking of the notion of national security, and *(b)* to misportray an enormously complex 'international system' as something much cruder; that is, as above all an inter-state system where the state is again understood in the map sense. This is the approach favoured by Realists. So when our Indian experts talk of strategic national security this almost automatically becomes a strongly outward directed understanding of what constitutes threats to national security; that is, in relation to *other* states. Of course, there is also talk of internal security, but what is usually meant here is little more than threats of a law and order or subversive kind which would undermine the authority of the state or weaken the 'unity and integrity' (another favoured phrase) of the country. Once again, the standard distortions of Realism are at work – state security as a virtual synonym for national security and strategic security threats as those which undermine the boundary-demarcated 'national-territorial totality'.

1. F Halliday, 'State and society in international relations. a second agenda', *Millennium* 16(2).

Rethinking the whole issue of India's national security in ways which can better address the challenges of the future is something I have written about at length elsewhere.[2] Since the purpose of this article is more specific – to show how current strategic thinking by Indian experts is particularly inadequate when it comes to judging the relationship between nuclear weapons and nuclear national security, I will rest content here with this brief discussion about the problems of Realist thinking and conventional strategic discourse in India in the hope that the impartial reader may recognise that (whatever the strengths or weaknesses of my own case against nuclearisation) something is very wrong indeed about the way Indian experts generally think about strategic and national security matters.

Realism is a profoundly ahistorical doctrine of international politics. It is obsessed about the issue of international conflict, particularly wars, but cannot theorise sensibly about the causes of war, and therefore about the sources of peace. This also applies to matters of nuclear war, peace and threats; namely, nuclear security. In practice, even Realists are forced to deal concretely with specific wars that break out. Thus they can, and often do, provide quite sensible analyses about the actual causes of specific wars. But this is in spite, not because, of their general framework of thinking. For them the world system is above all a system of states. State rivalries are an inescapable feature of this system. Power (always crudely understood and with a strong bias towards the military component, nowadays somewhat leavened by a greater emphasis on economic power, itself crudely understood) is unevenly distributed in this system. Keeping the peace or organising a particular state's security, especially if (like India) it sees itself as a major, independent player on this world stage, is then the ever vigilant pursuit of effective *balances*. If in the non-nuclear era the crucial mechanism for achieving this was the 'balance of power', in the nuclear age it is unavoidably the *nuclear balance of power;* that is, nuclear security through the pursuit of effective nuclear deterrence against nuclearly armed rivals, actual or potential.

Such a general, abstract and ahistorical understanding of war and peace is then repeatedly touted as the acme of strategic wisdom in our era of late modernity whose most fundamental characteristic is that it embodies a rate, depth and scope of *change* that is qualitatively greater than in all of human existence prior to it. This should make the content (not just the perceptions) of national security more complex than it has ever been. The role of the security expert should be to try and grasp this growing complexity and to recognise the historically rooted character of security, national security and nuclear security. Instead we are given the 'eternal verities' of 'power balances' as the source of 'enduring securities'.

Take the issue of nuclear strategic discourse. The fact that there has so far been no nuclear war means there is no foundational data for cross-checking arguments about the claimed efficacy or inefficacy of nuclear weapons and deterrence. This means all strategic nuclear discourse whether by pro- or anti-nuclearists is of an *unavoidably speculative* nature. This is what makes it possible for both sides in the strategic nuclear debate to hold onto their positions with a fair degree of complacency. However, this does not mean that both sides have an equally plausible case. There are more sensible and less sensible ways of speculating! What is it that distinguishes undisciplined, fanciful and irresponsible forms of strategic speculation on nuclear security from more sober, informed, disciplined and sensible forms of such speculation?

At least two things. First, the arguments proffered must have an internally logical coherence and consistency. Second, what distinguishes the plausibility or reasonableness of one case against the other are the controls on strategic speculation provided by *historical evidence*. On both counts, the anti-nuclearists have much the stronger and more plausible case than those who claim that nuclear deterrence works.

Deterrence advocates can be divided into the cruder and the more sophisticated lot. The latter recognise that the idea of pursuing nuclear security through reliance on the effectiveness of nuclear deterrence is inherently flawed and illogical in a way that does not apply to the search for conventional, non-nuclear military security through the pursuit of conventional arming and conventional, non-nuclear deterrence. This is because (unless one is a nuclear war fighter) a burden of expectation is placed on nuclear weapons which is never placed on conventional weaponry. A nuclear war between two rivals capable of inflicting major nuclear damage on each other must never be fought and cannot in any meaningful sense be won. That is to say, unlike conventional weapons and wars, you cannot have nuclear security through the use of nuclear weapons but only through their non-use. A burden of securing assured, guaranteed or permanent peace (non-use) is thus placed on nuclear weapons which is itself fundamentally irrational.

Pro-nuclearists who realise this, will also therefore talk of how, deep down, nuclear deterrence is a flawed and dangerous doctrine, and how they also want a nuclear free world as quickly as possible as the only sure route to nuclear security for all. But despite their criticisms of the illogicality of nuclear deterrence they believe nonetheless that nuclear deterrence does work at least for long enough to make pursuit of security through it strategically sensible and desirable. Thus they are constantly involved in an intellectual and political exercise in incoherence. They try to square the impossible circle – no, nuclear deterrence, deep down, doesn't work and we must not rely on it, but yes, it does work with enough confidence and for enough time, so we should rely on it! But true, we cannot confidently specify the time-scale for when it will work and when it will stop working!

2 A. Vanaik, *Rethinking India's Future Foreign Policy*, forthcoming.

This is where the second factor of historical evidence comes in. One of the crucial issues in strategic nuclear discourse which will continue to be debated for a long time is the historical assessment of the relationship between superpower nuclear deterrence and the 'long peace' in Europe during the Cold War: that is, did deterrence work? This is, of course, a counterfactual claim (either way) which cannot be conclusively resolved. But this does not mean there cannot be more plausible and less plausible assessments.

There are basically three positions on this vexed issue. First, there are those who would give enormous weight to the effect of nuclear deterrence in bringing about this peace. Second, there are those who argue that nuclear deterrence was one among a set of necessary factors, even if not the most important. Third, there are those who argue that nuclear deterrence was essentially irrelevant to procuring the long peace which was over-determined by a whole set of non-nuclear factors. In East Europe the peace had much more to do with the impact of Cold War political-ideological rivalries which is why, after its end, wars have erupted in ex-USSR and ex-Yugoslavia irrespective of the continued overhang of nuclear weapons in Europe. As for West Europe, the long peace was institutionalised by the processes of democratic stabilisation, sustained economic prosperity, and the efforts to enhance West European commonalities through the structures of the EEC/EC.

I believe the third position to be the strongest but pro-nuclearists will disagree and will resort in their own way to citing the historical record to make their case. Though the sophisticated pro-nuclearist admits that seeking security through deterrence is in the deepest sense untenable because of the *degenerative logic* inherent in such an approach, he or she is nonetheless willing to cite the historical record regarding the long European peace because the workings of this degenerative logic have not so far led to the outbreak of nuclear war. But the pro-nuclearist becomes much more defensive and dismissive of the historical record when this works against him or her. Where the degenerative logic of deterrence expressed itself not in an outbreak of war between the superpowers but in the utterly irrational arms race with the development of insanely enormous overkill capacities, then the pro-nuclearist has to remain somewhat subdued. He or she cannot claim that there is a compatibility between this actual record of the arms race and any notion of *sensible* deterrence or *sensible* nuclear security!

No wonder many an Indian expert is tempted to talk of the special qualities of the Asian mind which will somehow protect it from the stupidities of superpower behaviour in this regard. But the actual historical record is of *(a)* irrational arms racing by the superpowers; *(b)* preparations by France, China and U.K. according to the doctrine of proportional deterrence which even after 30 to 40 years of existence do not amount to a minimum credible deterrence against a first strike by Russia or USA, but are more than minimum against some other presumed regional rival – yet another form of irrational behaviour!

There are other problems for the Indian pro-nuclearist. It is all very well to cite the long peace in Europe. But what is the historical record of strategic nuclear threats to India that justify it going nuclear? Here the discourse of the pro-nuclearists takes a revealing turn. The Pakistan threat is cited frequently but though this is useful for the purposes of salesmanship to the general public about why India should have the bomb, it has a fatal weak spot. Pakistan has repeatedly offered regional denuclearisation of South Asia to India. If the Pakistan threat is the main or only problem then such denuclearisation of both countries is the obvious and sensible solution. Here the Indian strategic community mostly responds – no, we also have to worry about the Chinese nuclear threat.

But here lies the rub. Those who seek to construct a case for why India must go nuclear to address the Chinese threat cannot take recourse to the actual historical record to cite examples of belligerent nuclear behaviour by China against India. Instead, in typical Realist fashion, they make reference to abstract, possibilist threats. But then what else can they do? They can point to missiles in Tibet and speculate that these are targeted on India and not on the Eastern seaboard of Russia, or could be swung around quickly to target India if required. They can argue that in a future flare-up on the Sino-Indian border, the Chinese can win the conventional engagement through explicit or implicit nuclear blackmail. They can argue that given the nuclear imbalance in China's favour, it might on some future occasion use it as political leverage for some purpose.

But what these advocates cannot do is deny that China has never nuclearly threatened India (or any other country) in all these decades of possessing these weapons. They cannot deny that India has lived for 32 years with the Chinese bomb and done so comfortably. They cannot deny that China's nuclear might was of no consequence at all in 1979 when it received a bloody nose from non-nuclear Vietnam. They cannot deny that nuclear weapons on both sides did not prevent serious conventional conflict on the Ussuri border between China and USSR. They cannot even deny that the *only* country that has attempted (unsuccessfully) to nuclearly blackmail India was the USA in 1971; and that all this time India has had no choice but to live with the American bomb and has done so comfortably.

Nor do these advocates call attention to the fact that the era of Russia-India *bhai bhai* is over or suggest that India should prepare a nuclear deterrent posture in the future against Russia (and the USA). They do not call attention to the abstract, possibilist threats posed by these two countries because India would find it enormously difficult if not impossible (unless Russia and USA rapidly make very deep cuts in their arsenals) to build a minimum credible deterrent against either. So India has little choice but to have a non-nuclear response towards

these nuclearly armed countries, a state of affairs if it is called attention to, might provoke a larger number to ask, well why not a similar reliance on a non-nuclear response to the utterly abstract, historically never exercised Chinese threat as well?

If the absence of proper historical controls on strategic speculation about India's relationship to nuclear China is one obvious lacuna in strategic thinking in this country, there are also others. Strategic speculation about what would happen; that is, how India's nuclear security would overall be enhanced if it went openly nuclear never goes beyond two tropes: *(a)* general assurances that Indian security would be enhanced, *(b)* occasional but convoluted technical calculations to show how India could establish a small but credible deterrent posture that could adequately address its security needs.

What about Chinese reaction to India going nuclear? Would not China have to factor India in, as an actual nuclear adversary and not just as a possible one, leading to major adjustments in its targeting, planning and preparations? Would all this enhance or reduce Indo-Chinese hostility? What about Pakistan's reaction? Would not Pakistan then go openly nuclear? Does this lead to less or more tensions and rivalry between the two countries? If nuclear weapons armaments are the symptoms and secondary inputs into further promoting hostility (remember, deterrence is about trying to achieve security through promotion of *fear* in the other side) but are never the primary causes of Indo-Pakistan hostility which has separate political roots, then how valid is the view that such mutual nuclear arming will prevent even conventional conflicts from breaking out? Does the prospect of a Chinese-Pakistan nuclear alliance recede or strengthen if India openly goes nuclear?

There are many other such questions pertinent to the issue, but what has been raised here should suffice to indicate that India's security experts should think much more seriously than they have done. They need to do much more serious *strategic homework* and not pretend to others or to themselves that simply repeating Realist *mantras* about the importance of nuclear balancing, or of the need to deter possible adversaries selectively chosen (China yes, Russia/USA no), or painting abstract scenarios about possible Chinese threats constitutes in itself any kind of a serious case for going nuclear.

Over the last two years there has been a prolonged debate about whether or not India should sign the CTBT. I will not go over this by now well-trodden ground. But one of the more important if indirect consequences of this debate is that the pressure on India to abandon its long held posture of nuclear ambiguity (neither foreclosing nor exercising the nuclear option) in favour of openly going nuclear has increased to levels never before experienced. The most striking fact about the sources of this increased pressure is that these have nothing whatsoever to do with adverse changes in India's 'strategic security environment' even as this term is understood by our experts. The main reason for this growing pressure has to do with the increasingly obvious incoherence in India's official stand on the CTBT. If the CTBT is so iniquitous or inimical to Indian interests as made out by New Delhi, then what is the sense of not signing it but doing nothing else; that is, simply maintaining the old status quo position?

That is why there is now much greater pressure for defying the CTBT in some way by moving upwards from nuclear ambiguity along a ladder of escalation: perhaps stopping on a higher rung of carrying out a test or series of tests, or even perhaps climbing up further towards a position of open production and deployment of nuclear weapons. Could there be better evidence than what has happened in the current context – this increased pressure – to show that India's strategic nuclear obsessions have much less to do with actual or even perceived external threats than with grandiose self-perceptions and confused strategic thinking!

Play it again, Sam

JYOTI MALHOTRA

NEARLY twenty years after India opted to stay out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968, the world's nuclear powers are manoeuvring to get New Delhi to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). This particular D-day is not far off: when the Conference on Disarmament (CD), which is negotiating the treaty in Geneva, reconvenes on 29 July, India will have to decide what to do: sign, not sign or veto the draft text, thereby preventing the treaty from coming into force.

Strategic analysts, old-timers now, who watched the game unfold in the mid-to-the-late 1960s say they sometimes experience a sense of *deja vu* – with one difference. Then it was Indira Gandhi, who almost single-handedly, stood up to the defence and foreign affairs establishment in Delhi, most of whom wanted her to sign on. In retrospect, the courage of the *goongi gudiya* (literally, dumb doll) who had become prime minister barely two years before, seems remarkable: as her own officials wrote cost-benefit analyses to prove that not signing would mean offending one of the world's super powers, the U.S.A, the then president Lyndon B. Johnson was monitoring the progress of U.S. ships carrying food aid to India on the high seas. The implicit threat: the U.S. would stop the food from reaching India if New Delhi did not sign the NPT.

But the more things change twenty years later, the more they seem to remain the same: even though one super power, the Soviet Union, has run itself aground, the other hasn't given up the missionary zeal with which it has tried to bribe *and* browbeat other nations to give up nuclear weapons. Mostly, it has succeeded: except for the five-nation nuclear club, consisting of the U.S., (now) Russia, Great Britain, France and China (the same five nations are also permanent members of the UN Security Council), only India, Pakistan and Israel are believed to still be nuclear-capable. They are known as 'threshold states', in that they are believed to have bombs in the basement, only nobody knows how many. They are the ones who haven't come overground – or in Cold War spy language, the ones who haven't yet come in from the cold.

And yet fifty years into independence, the challenges to India's nationhood, both within and without, don't seem to let up: as external pressures mount on India not to play the role of the 'spoiler' or obstruct the CTBT in Geneva, there are strong rumours circulating at home that a combined cost-benefit analysis done by Finance Secretary Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Foreign Secretary Salman

Haider and Cabinet Secretary Surinder Singh says that if India blocks or vetoes the treaty, the situation would be '*worse than 1991*' (my emphasis).

Or, that the international repercussions to the decision would be so unfavourable that they would have the effect of isolating India at world fora; at home, foreign business would be reluctant to invest in a country that is seen to be behaving like the 'rogue states' (a definition given to these nations by the U.S.) of Libya, Iraq, Iran and North Korea. Foreign confidence in India's ability to manage its house would be badly shattered, the note implies, and the worst nightmare would come true all over again: the country's credit rating would be downgraded, a balance of payments crisis would ensue *and* India would once again have to mortgage all its gold reserves. So, the note is supposed to ask, is all this worth the risk of exploding another nuclear device and/or blocking the CTBT?

Of course, as officials refuse to confirm or deny the existence of such a note, the legitimate question that must be asked seems forgotten: even as cost-benefit analyses of going nuclear – and indeed of not signing the CTBT, are done – shouldn't India make the resultant decision on the basis of its *own* national interest? 'The defence and foreign affairs establishment in Delhi is split down the middle,' says a senior official seeking anonymity, adding, 'some of us are in favour of going nuclear, others point out the heavy costs involved. But that is the Indian way, a gentle slide towards compromise...'

India's concerns – and demands – at the CD at Geneva are basically simple: the world, which for the last 50 years has been talking the language of nuclear disarmament, must now show concrete evidence of doing so. (Off the record, Indian officials say that the only country in the world which has dropped an atomic bomb – and the first one in Hiroshima was an untested device – is the U.S.) Such concrete evidence can only be provided if the nuclear powers announce a time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons, as has been done with the Chemical Weapons Convention (there are pledges to eliminate chemical weapons between 10-15 years). Secondly, all nuclear weapons powers must not be allowed to test or refine nuclear weapons under any conditions – whether it is underground, underwater or in the laboratory through computer simulation. Only then can the generic-sounding 'comprehensive test ban treaty' truly deserve to be called what it is.

India's permanent representative in Geneva, Arundhati Ghose, has articulately pointed out the hypocrisy associated with western support for the CTBT: Since the CTBT only prohibits 'test explosions', it cannot, for example, prevent a country like the U.S., which had planned to conduct a computer-simulated laboratory test in the middle of June, from doing so. That test has now been put off for later, but U.S. officials have nowhere said that they will forego such a test. Further, the absence of public declarations on a time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons are also noticeable.

U.S. officials in response say that they are slowly cutting down their nuclear arsenals under the START agreements with Russia, but that they will never publicly declare a time-bound elimination of their arsenals. 'If that is what India wants, it can forget it...there's a nasty world out there and the U.S. must retain its arsenal to protect this world against those rogues,' one official said. He then went on to ask the rhetorical question: 'What if the U.S. had got rid of its nuclear arsenal and a rogue like Saddam Hussein of Iraq threatened to blow up the world. What would the world do then?'

There is a third, and perhaps the most important reason by far, for India's refusal to sign a treaty like the CTBT: since the treaty arrests the country's growth on the nuclear learning curve, it follows that if India signs, it will never publicly be able to go further than its demonstration of the peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE) it carried out in 1974. Having untested bombs in the basement would be of little use, since the world (read the U.S.) would tighten the isolationist noose around New Delhi's neck every time it tried to flex its muscles.

To follow that argument to its logical conclusion would mean that India's 'keeping the option open' argument would be effectively rendered null and void – since there would no longer be an option to be kept open (it's another argument what that option really means twenty two years after the PNE). That, then, would directly impinge on the security environment of the nation and effectively mean that the U.S. would assume the role of a peace-broker in the region.

Worse, the CTBT would also forever close the doors of the nuclear superclub around itself – the U.S. already has in place very tight legislation that calls for immediate sanctions to be applied on any country, except the acknowledged nuclear five, in case it conducts a nuclear test. Here, then, would be a super-elitist group, already controlling world security on the Security Council, and now wielding the ultimate currency of power – nuclear weapons. If the NPT legitimised the division of the world into nuclear haves and have-nots twenty years ago, the CTBT would freeze that division into permanence. For India, one part of the continual, agonising search for a sense of identity, for the ability to identify – and if possible, create a national consensus around – 'national interest' would permanently die.

Which is why at the last session in Geneva in June, India clearly told the conference that the draft text (called the Ramaker text, after chairman Jaap Ramaker of the Netherlands) should be amended or it would not be able to sign it in its current form. The amendments must either reflect India's concerns on nuclear disarmament – or New Delhi must be taken off the list of countries (who are said to have nuclear monitoring facilities on their soil) that must sign the treaty before it could enter into force. Faced with India's ultimatum, UK's disarmament ambassador in Geneva, Michael Heston, angrily accused India of 'wriggling on a

hook', a charge that surprised and dismayed even the normally combative U.S. delegation. 'Such language should never be used against another country,' said one U.S. official. In Delhi, the new British High Commissioner was summoned to take the rap for his country's indiscretion.

The upshot in Geneva was that the western nuclear powers just changed the rules of the game – now 44 countries, including India, had to sign the CTBT before it could come into force. Strategic analysts here surmised that the western nuclear powers would go to ridiculous lengths if only to 'cap, reduce and eliminate' the nuclear potential of the threshold states. Actually, it was slowly becoming clear, India was really the target for this elaborate charade: for if New Delhi could be somehow made to sign on – or even persuaded to merely keep quiet and not block, which meant that the provisions of the treaty would still apply – then Pakistan would happily join the club (so far Islamabad is citing Delhi's refusal to sign as an excuse to stay out). That would leave Israel, a country that the U.S. has carefully tied up in its apron-strings (the largest foreign aid recipient of the U.S., amounting to about $3 billion annually) and is not unduly concerned about its nuclear arsenal.

Meanwhile, back home, the charge had been floating around that India would have signed the CTBT if the Narasimha Rao government had just stayed on in power a few more months. Or that's at least what some senior western diplomats in the capital wanted journalists and opinion-makers to believe. 'If Rao remained in power, India would have signed. Now we're not so sure,' said one senior diplomat. Added another, 'We got the assurance under the Rao government that India would sign.'

How, when and why, then, did the change of heart in government take place? Strategic analysts feel that a new political party ruling Delhi was probably the best thing that happened to India on the CTBT. Narasimha Rao was so committed to the liberalisation process he had himself unleashed, they add, that he realised he could not be openly seen to be backing out of a treaty that U.S. President Bill Clinton had himself announced India would endorse – in Rao's presence, in Washington, in May 1994, during Rao's state visit to the U.S.

But there's also a different side to the story: under pressure to open up the economy to foreign investors, to bring money into a cash-strapped nation, Rao performed a series of feints and dodges for three years – a feat that would have done any nation proud. Not only was the economy under siege, but Kashmir was becoming an international issue. Narasimha Rao realised that India couldn't sustain another attack on the CTBT right then. His favourite tools, procrastination and doublespeak, were employed to defend a nation, whose intelligentsia couldn't often understand what was really going on. But over the years as the economic situation improved and the greenbacks began to flow in – and as India, simultaneously, warded off the attacks on Kashmir in the human rights conference in Geneva and at the UN – morale at home also began to soar. Around then, in the autumn of 1995, erstwhile external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee announced the linkage between worldwide nuclear disarmament and India's signature on the CTBT.

Clearly, however, with the Congress losing power at the centre and the consequent investiture of a loose 13-party coalition government in Delhi, pressures to sign or not sign the CTBT began to be increasingly seen in terms of 'national interest'. That much is clear from the fact that external affairs minister I.K. Gujral made a crucial change in the statement that was delivered in the Rajya Sabha on July 15 to the one that was delivered in the Lok Sabha later the same afternoon (to avoid contempt of the House, the Rajya Sabha statement was marked 'please check against delivery'). As it turned out, the new statement was far more hard-hitting and forceful.

There was, in fact, considerable behind-the-scenes drama that went into making the change – a line in the Rajya Sabha statement, 'we do not want to be "spoilers" or obstruct the treaty' was dropped in the Lok Sabha text, while another crucial line, which said, 'we cannot endorse or accept (the treaty) in its present form' was introduced. Gujral himself reiterated that the Lok Sabha statment was 'the final version'. But according to highly-placed sources, the earlier statement was sent to the Rajya Sabha for typing on Saturday, 13 June, only after which Gujral and senior officials from the ministry could hold discussions with senior leaders of major parties. Narasimha Rao of the Congress was consulted as was former external affairs minister Pranab Mukherjee; so were senior left party leaders and, of course BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee. It is believed that the interventions of the Congress and the left mainly led to the changes in the text – reflecting a similar mind-set on the issue across the political spectrum.

The changes, analysts agree, are so significant that they veritably point to an overhaul in the government's mind on the CTBT. According to one newspaper report, a U.S. *demarche* (a statement of official policy of the concerned country) to the Indian government had clearly spelt out that India would be seen as a 'spoiler' if it 'obstructed' the treaty – exactly the same words that were used in the earlier Rajya Sabha statement. But officials confirm that consultations undertaken by Gujral and his men across the political spectrum served to strengthen the government's hand and give it the confidence that it needed to make up its sometimes wavering mind.

Even a senior official like the secretary (external relations) in the ministry of external affairs, A.N. Ram, on the eve of Gujral's visit to the ASEAN foreign ministers conference and the ARF (the political-security organisation of the ASEAN) meeting in Indonesia, clearly said that India's stand on the CTBT 'would not change just because we're going to Jakarta. We don't feel there's any need to be defensive on an issue on which there is national consensus,' he added. It now

appeared as if New Delhi's hardening stand seemed to be pointing in the way of blocking the treaty if the draft text in Geneva did not address its concerns.

Meanwhile, western nuclear powers had been busy: the U.S. sent two demarches to the Indian government, one addressed to the ministry of external affairs asking India to sign the CTBT – otherwise it will be considered a 'spoiler' and be isolated internationally. The other, sent to the commerce ministry, promised that the U.S. would take India to the WTO for its failure to live up to its international obligations on the patents regime. (The ministry is said to have been so rattled that one way to deal with the matter, it suggested, was to postpone inviting U.S. commerce secretary Mickey Kantor to India until the patents law was passed in parliament.) U.S. secretary of state Warren Christopher even called Gujral. Clearly, Clinton wanted the treaty badly enough before he went into re-election, and now offered talks during Gujral's maiden visit as foreign minister to Jakarta with Christopher.

The Russians also got into the act, giving India a demarche on the issue. Then, softening their approach, Russian foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov wrote to Gujral, asking India to sign the CTBT in exchange for 'non-binding' declarations on nuclear disarmament in Geneva. They also offered talks in Jakarta. So did the Chinese foreign minister. Meanwhile, the ASEAN leaders promised to use the ARF as a sounding board on the issue. To some on the Indian team old enough to remember, it was beginning to look like another scene being played out of the old 1960s drama around the NPT.

Interestingly, even as these official parodies continued, some western nuclear powers also simultaneously began to make moves on the quiet – probing non-official strategic analysts and other 'friends' in the crucial ministries of defence and foreign affairs, seeking out their opinion on the possible reaction in India to a deal on the CTBT. So what could India possibly want? High technology in defence and computers, including those with dual uses? Nuclear power reactors, so far banned because New Delhi has refused to sign the NPT? Would India bargain if it were allowed a glimpse of a permanent seat on the Security Council when that body was to be extended? One suggestion that found its way into the atmosphere even said that India could well 'test and sign' the CTBT – and if that would have the immediate consequence of bringing relations down to an all-time low, such a period would ultimately pass.

As this article goes to the press, no confirmations or denials could be obtained about the shadowy world of nuclear compromise. Everything was possible here, official and non-official sources said, nothing could be ruled out. Assuming, however, that the offers were real, could the U.S. be trusted to fulfil its part of the bargain? Would Washington ever part with its only real bargaining chip, the Security Council seat, that secretly tantalises Delhi?

The shadows close in on us, but not enough to hide a remarkable speech made by the U.S. ambassador to India, Frank Wisner, to the Army Staff College in Quetta, Pakistan – around the same time the diplomatic offensive was taking place in Delhi. Wisner's advice to Islamabad, in effect, was to lay off Kashmir, that elections, however faulty, were being held in India's side of the valley and would be followed by polls in the state itself. Instead, he gently nudged them to get their act together with India on other issues, especially trade and investment.

As the shock wore off officials in Delhi over the unsought-for compliments by Wisner, they also began to realise that the U.S. was indulging in its old south Asian pastime: keeping the Kashmir pot on the boil. The thought rankled that the implicit statement behind the compliment was a *quid pro quo* on the CTBT. For now, though, they realised that the only Indian response could be silence. They'd much rather that the U.S. 'shut up and not interfere' in Kashmir – but if it had to so be, then of course it was better that the noises off were positive, rather than negative.

Securing India's option

RAHUL ROY-CHAUDHURY

ONE of the most significant aspects of India's decision not to sign the draft of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) was that it was made on considerations of national security, not on the lure of international peace and stability. An attempt to maintain the option to build nuclear weapons, in a neighbourhood consisting of such weapons, is far more important than providing support to a measure that neither enhances nuclear non-proliferation nor contributes to global nuclear weapons disarmament. Such a course of action is nothing to be ashamed of, as some commentators have suggested; after all, the basic function of a government is to promote the security of the country, not compromise it.

Unfortunately, India's refusal to sign the CTBT is, by itself, not sufficient to secure a nuclear weapons option in the future. In order to do so, additional steps need to be carried out. These include the conduct of a series of nuclear weapons tests; the maintenance of an adequate stock of fissile material; the development and production of ballistic missiles; the allocation of satisfactory expenditure on defence; and the formulation of a doctrine for a nuclear weapons capability. In the absence of these requirements, India will simply not be able to provide a credible or effective deterrent capability against Pakistani or Chinese nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future. In effect, by doing nothing more than not signing the CTBT, India could still be closing forever its nuclear weapons option in a world that will never be free of such weapons.

The attempt to secure a nuclear weapons option, therefore, would necessitate a pro-active nuclear policy, but not necessarily require the actual production or stockpiling of nuclear weapons for purposes of threat or employment. It would, however, continue to provide India the capability to build nuclear weapons if and when the regional or international security environment required it to do so. This would very much be in line

with H.D. Deve Gowda's own assertion, in his first published interview as Prime Minister, that 'India will not go for the bomb'.

In effect, therefore, India ought to adopt a two-pronged approach in relation to its nuclear policy. On the one hand, it ought to ensure that its nuclear weapons option is secure for the foreseeable future. The quantity and quality of its nuclear weapons tests, fissile material, ballistic missiles, defence expenditure and nuclear doctrine would depend on the perceived nature and extent of threats and challenges, primarily from both Pakistan and China.

Simultaneously, India ought to reassure the international community that it would sign the CTBT, as well as the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), as soon as its nuclear weapons option is secured. This could take up to three years, the time required to ratify the CTBT for it to come into force.

Since the defeat of the Indian Army in the war against China in the autumn of 1962, considerable improvements in bilateral relations between the two countries have taken place. Nevertheless, China continues to retain large areas of Indian territory and represents a substantial challenge to Indian security in the long term. This is primarily related to its nuclear weapons forces, the modernisation of its conventional arms, especially its power projection capabilities, and the nature of Sino-Pakistani military cooperation and collaboration.

China tested its first nuclear weapon over 32 years ago, in 1964 at Lop Nor in north-western Xinjiang province. Since then it has followed a determined policy of carrying out at least one test a year on average, in order to improve and modernise its nuclear weapons arsenal. To date, China has carried out 44 nuclear weapons tests, and possesses 250-300 nuclear weapons. It has no intention of giving up these weapons in the future, in spite of reductions in the nuclear arsenals of the United States and Russia. Instead, it plans to conduct an additional nuclear weapons test till the time the CTBT is expected to be in place in September 1996.

Meanwhile, another of India's neighbours, and primary source of military threat, Pakistan, has had the capacity to build nuclear weapons for nearly 10 years, since 1987. It is a matter of dispute whether or not the Pakistani government took a decision three years later to cap its nuclear weapons capacity. In any case, recent reports indicate that Pakistan may already have built up to 15 nuclear bombs. Pakistan also remains the only state in the world, other than the five acknowledged nuclear weapons states, that has, for all practical purposes, declared itself a nuclear weapons state.

Although Pakistan has not yet carried out a nuclear weapons test on its territory, this does not appear a necessity in view of the nature and extent of China's assistance and collaboration in its nuclear weapons programme. Over the years, China has not only transferred blueprints of the design of a nuclear bomb to Pakistan, but also supplied it with critical components and materials as well. The most recent example has been the transfer of 5,000 ring magnets to Pakistan, in blatant violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). China is also believed to have tested a nuclear bomb on Pakistan's behalf on its own territory.

In marked contrast, India has not followed up on its single nuclear weapons test carried out over 22 years ago, in 1974. Although it appears that the Narasimha Rao government had authorised the preparation for another nuclear weapons test in late 1995, it is not clear whether this was done with the actual intention of carrying it out or just as a means of bluff, in order to stem the pressure from the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In the event, a nuclear weapons test did not take place.

In effect, from its single test India has not been able to get the data required to refine the design of the weapon, nor even be sure of its reliability or robustness. Moreover, basic engineering and computer simulations carried out over the years can, at best, enable the deployment of crude low-yield atomic bombs aboard aircraft at reasonable notice; they cannot ensure the employment of such a weapon on ballistic missiles. In this respect, the conduct of a series of nuclear weapons tests is a necessity, not a desirable course of action, in order to maintain a credible Indian deterrent capability in the regional security environment.

In the absence of an adequate stock of weapons-grade fissile material, the ability to conduct nuclear weapons tests, or even maintain the option to build nuclear weapons, is non-existent. Not surprisingly, the follow-on global arms control measure to the CTBT, especially advocated by the West in recent times, is the FMCT. This proposed treaty would drastically affect the availability of weapons-grade fissile material for a country like India, while simply allowing countries like the United States and Russia (which in any case no longer produce plutonium or highly enriched uranium for weapons) to simply maintain their existing stocks of fissile material.

The FMCT would place all of India's fissile material production facilities under safeguards, and force it to stop production of weapons-usable material for nuclear explosive purposes. Although India could continue production by claiming that the weapons usable material was for fuelling breeders, research reactors, and naval reactors, it would be under intense pressure not to do so. In effect, unless India increases its weapons-grade fissile material to a level relative to the nature of the nuclear threats and challenges it faces, its accession to the FMCT would critically affect its ability to secure a nuclear weapons option.

Over the years, China has been successful in developing and deploying a fairly large number of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles of mixed sophistication, to be launched from the ground and the sea. Although it has only a few Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), over 40 of its surface-to-surface medium-range ballistic missiles are capable of targeting military and economic facilities in India. In addition, China has one

nuclear-powered submarine armed with 12 ballistic missiles. The recent series of Chinese nuclear weapons tests is believed to have been conducted to provide multiple warhead capabilities for its ballistic missiles.

Meanwhile, since 1991 Pakistan has acquired over 50 short-range 'M-11' surface-to-surface mobile ballistic missiles from China, as well as deployed 18 indigenously-built, with Chinese technological assistance, 'Hatf-1' and 'Hatf-11' short-range ballistic missiles. In addition, it appears increasingly likely that over the years a large number of mobile 'Scud' ballistic missiles have been transferred from Afghanistan to Pakistan, and are under the effective control of Pakistani security forces. Recent reports also indicate that at least some of the 'M-11' ballistic missiles may already have been moved out from their crates at Sargodha air force base and made operational. More important, these ballistic missiles are nuclear-weapon capable, as they can be armed with nuclear warheads built by Pakistan. In this respect, it is important to note that the design blueprints provided by China to Pakistan were those of a nuclear weapon capable of delivery by ballistic missiles.

In marked contrast, India has yet to deploy a single ballistic missile, let alone test a nuclear weapon for employment aboard such a delivery system. Although a major defence Research and Development (R&D) programme for the design and development of a number of missile systems began over 13 years ago in 1983, none of the missiles have so far been deployed with the armed forces. The Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) included the indigenous development of two ballistic missiles, the 'Prithvi' and the 'Agni'.

The 'Prithvi' surface-to-surface tactical (150-250 km) mobile battlefield missile system has been launched 15 times during tests conducted so far. This includes two user trials carried out by the army, as well as a single test of the longer-range version of the missile for the air force. The user trials for the army version (150 km) are now complete, and the missile is ready for serial production and induction into service. Nonetheless, the government continues to refrain from taking such a decision.

Meanwhile, the 'Agni' surface-to-surface medium range (1,500-2,500 km.) ballistic missile has been launched three times during tests conducted so far, of which two were successful. Although the first phase of development is said to be complete, the 'Agni' needs to be tested at least ten more times (including user trials by the air force) in order to be ready for induction into service. The government, however, has not yet initiated any additional programme of development. In the absence of any effective Indian delivery system capable of reaching Pakistan as well as China, India's nuclear weapons option is clearly far from secure.

In order to secure a nuclear weapons option, the allocation of sufficient expenditure for nuclear weapons tests and the development and production of both short-range and medium-range ballistic missiles is a necessity. In the long run, a credible nuclear weapons capability could even lead to a decrease in the level of funding for defence. However, if this is to take place, the present trend in defence expenditure needs to be reversed.

India's defence expenditure as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined substantially from 3.59% in 1987-88 to an estimated 2.39% for 1995-96; the lowest it has been for nearly 30 years. This reduction in the defence expenditure-GDP ratio by a third is even more significant in the context of a slower rate of growth of GDP in the last few years. At the same time, declining defence expenditures have been adversely affected by the sharp devaluation of the Indian rupee against foreign currencies.

More important, on an average, about 70% of the defence budget is spent on revenue expenditure—the maintenance (including salary and allowances) of the armed forces. Only the remainder is allocated for the acquisition of weapon systems and equipment, either from foreign sources or through indigenous development and production.

In contrast, Pakistan's defence expenditure as a proportion of GDP for 1996-97, for example, is estimated to be as high as 6.89%; this has not changed much in the past few years. Meanwhile, China's unofficial, but more accurate, figure of defence expenditure as a proportion of the GDP is much higher. Significantly, for the first time in many years, China did not even publish a one-line figure of its official defence expenditure for 1996-97.

Although the formulation of a doctrine for a nuclear weapons capability is essential to secure a nuclear weapons option, it is far more difficult and complex than one for an existing stock of nuclear weapons. Nonetheless, this needs to be based on the collective set of factors described above, including the nature and extent of perceived threats and challenges from both Pakistan and China, the number of nuclear weapons tests to be carried out, and the number and type of ballistic missiles to be produced.

In addition, an effective command and control system needs to be ensured for quick decisions and, most important of all, the determination of the stage and time at which the deterioration of the regional or international security situation would necessitate the implementation of the nuclear weapons option. This could be followed by attempts at advocating a policy of No First Use (NFU) of nuclear weapons, as well as, in the case of Pakistan, for example, of extending the agreement not to attack each other's nuclear installations, to cities and economic targets.

In tandem with securing its nuclear weapons option, India ought to launch a massive diplomatic campaign to reassure the international community of its true intentions. This would essentially emphasise that it seeks not the acquisition of nuclear weapons, but simply the ability to credibly maintain the option to build them when required. India's restraint in nuclear matters so far, in not building nuclear weapons despite severe provoca-

tion (including Pakistan's nuclear weapons capacity and the deployment of nuclear-capable 'M-11' ballistic missiles), also needs to be stressed.

In effect, India would be emphasising its intention to enhance international peace and security by signing both the CTBT and the FMCT once it is in a position to do so. For the international community, India's acceptance of both these international treaties, albeit on its own terms, would still be a better option than its non-adherence.

If the major players in the international community – the United States, Russia, the European Union, and China – are opposed to India's policy to secure a nuclear weapons option, they could attempt to put pressure on it to immediately sign the arms control agreements in three ways – through economic sanctions, technology controls, and political isolation. However, these are not likely to influence India to change its nuclear stance.

A recent study carried out by a noted defence economist specifically examined, on a worst case basis, the implications of economic sanctions on India by the United States, if it decided to renew nuclear testing. The conclusion was that 'India need not worry about any negative fall-out on its economy due to the United States and its allies reactions and counter-measures...to influence the Indian economy in order to force it to change its security policies'. In a related development, the American Ambassador to India also stated recently in Madras that American investment in India would not be withdrawn if it did not sign the CTBT.

Admittedly, the United States in coordination with other countries could impose strict export controls on not only military but, more important, perceived dual-use technology to India. A case in point was the denial a few years ago of cryogenic engine technology from Russia, which set back India's space programme by at least two to three years. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that the acquisition of a particular foreign technology is so important as to force India to change its nuclear stance.

Finally, an attempt could be made to isolate India in international political forums. The threat of labelling India a 'pariah' state has already begun; although a clear distinction is still being made between the well-known 'rogue' states of Iraq, Iran, Libya, and North Korea. Such a course of action would be foolish indeed, as there will be increasing differences amongst a large number of countries on this issue, especially as India could be willing to sign both the CTBT and the FMCT at a later stage.

In any case, India has been far from isolated in the last few months, when it officially linked time-bound global nuclear weapons disarmament to the signing of the CTBT. On the contrary, India was not only named a 'dialogue partner' of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), but given membership of the much sought after ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The swiftness of the latter decision clearly surprised many countries. The next meeting of the ARF in late July 1996, with India in attendance for the first time, is expected to go smoothly.

India's refusal to sign the draft of the CTBT is simply not sufficient to maintain its nuclear weapons option, based as it is on a single nuclear weapons test conducted over 22 years ago, along with the inability to confirm the reliability or robustness of its weapons capability with the passage of time. Therefore, a coordinated and well formulated politico-military approach is urgently required to secure India's nuclear weapons option for the future. Clearly, this may require some controversial decisions, such as the resumption of nuclear weapons tests and the development and production of both short-range and medium-range ballistic missiles. However, there does not appear to be any other alternative if India is serious in maintaining a credible deterrent capability against both Pakistani and Chinese nuclear weapons. Once the nuclear weapons option is secured, preferably in two to three years, India could accede to both the CTBT and the FMCT, thereby enhancing international peace and security.

Big boy games

T T POULOSE

EVERY country has its own coterie of power-brokers, wielding influence or attempting to share the power of decision-making on policies of national importance, both domestic and foreign. Such an elitist group is known for the expertise it can offer to the government in various fields of administration and in the process of policy-making. This intellectually resourceful group may operate through think tanks or even independently and consists of bureaucrats, intellectuals, academics, mediamen, scientists or political ideologues.

What is crucial is the role they play in policy formulations. The pursuit of power and peddling of influence are the sole aim of the power elite, no matter what this means to the larger national interest. The arrogance of power has turned some of them into megalomaniacs: their pride and prejudice and their jaundiced views of the world have had disastrous consequences on national interest. History is littered with numerous instances of policy disasters wrought by such a power elite. The triumph and tragedy of a nation can be directly attributed to the games its power elite plays.

The Indian power elite, both military and bureaucratic, had a crucial role in the 1962 war debacle and in our disastrous China policy during the Nehru era. But for the blundering bureaucratic influence that prevailed upon Indira Gandhi, the Kashmir problem would have been resolved once and for all. We had truncated Pakistan; 93,000 Pakistani soldiers were our prisoners; we occupied some strategic territory of West Pakistan, and Bangladesh as a separate state was created with Indian support. But all our gains in the battlefield, including our victory over Pakistan in 1971 were squandered away at the Shimla summit meeting by the fateful decisions taken by our power elite which undermined our national interest.

Some of the more distinguished experts of the power elite are functionaries of the most influential Delhi think tank. Their overpowering influence over the Indian bureaucracy, especially the defence and external affairs ministries, is well known. Ever since the time of Indira Gandhi, they have influenced our nuclear decision-making with their respective obsessions. However, the strong personality of Indira Gandhi and later Rajiv Gandhi kept them at bay, although they had powerful allies at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, the nerve centre of nuclear decision-making at the level of nuclear laboratory scientists.

If a nation is determined to become a nuclear weapon state, it will not wait thirty two years, as India has, to become one. The message is loud and clear: India does not want to be a full-fledged nuclear weapon state, its nuclear option or nuclear ambiguity reveals only its nuclear restraint. The lack of political will often attributed to India as the reason for its indifference to nuclearization has always been scoffed at by the governing political leadership. It has been perceived as

India's considered view that nuclear weapons shall not be the instrument of its national policy.

India's nuclear weapon lobby, however, has always been critical of this view. This conglomeration, which consists of a microscopic minority of highly conceited retired bureaucrats, nuclear scientists and journalists, lives in a make-believe world and consider themselves the ultimate authority on the country's nuclear policy. They hold a string of seminars every year on nuclear policy and weaponization and recommend it to the government for approval by trumpeting it to be based on a national consensus. Belonging mostly to the affluent class, they know nothing about poverty and are oblivious of the fact that India is one of the poorest countries in the world and that such anti-people policies cannot have the approval of the poor.

All the political parties in India have done their homework on India's nuclear policy and all, except the BJP, seem convinced that a policy of nuclear restraint is better for India than a nuclear arms race with Pakistan and China. This conviction is based on sound economic, political and strategic reasoning. These parties are fully aware of the dynamics of international politics, the dichotomy of the nuclear haves and nuclear have nots, the monopoly of nuclear weapons by the nuclear weapon states, the tardy and slow progress in the reduction of nuclear weapons through arms control measures such as SALT-I and SALT-II; START-I and START-II and also of the inequities in the NPT and CTBT. Thus the power elite could strike a chord only with BJP in their nuclear aspirations. The BJP and the bomb lobby are guided by suicidal nuclear nationalism, a situation very similar to the one in Pakistan.

Now that the Deve Gowda government has assumed power at the centre after the BJP lasted for just a fortnight, the power elite is regrouping itself and crying wolf about the sinister designs behind the Sino-Pak nuclear cooperation. These same experts in the past were persuading Pakistan to go nuclear and build a nuclear deterrent against India. Prime Minister Deve Gowda has committed his government to the task of poverty alleviation and economic progress of rural India. Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav is an acknowledged friend of the Indian Muslims and even believes in a confederation of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral is openly working for a rapprochement between India and Pakistan and for an improvement in Sino-Indian relations. It is, therefore, interesting to see how the nuclear weapon lobby is going to turn around and influence the nuclear decision-making of the Deve Gowda government.

A power elite dedicated to the proposition that India should become a nuclear weapon state at any cost revealed the tip of the iceberg when the CTBT negotiation began. Gen. Sundarji fired the first salvo when he proposed that it would be in India's national interest to go for a minimum nuclear deterrent at a modest cost of Rs. 27 billion, instead of signing the CTBT. Those who have not forgotten the nuclear debate in the 1960s, especially after China's Lop Nor test, will recall that the cost estimate of a modest nuclear force would be between Rs. 40-50 billion as worked out by the United Nations and by the Indian defence economists. At today's dollar value, this amount would easily be somewhere between Rs. 200-250 billion. The initial expenditure on the development of fission bombs including testing would be a small fraction of this total estimate. A major chunk would be spent on the development, production and deployment of the ballistic missiles such as the MRBM, IRBM and ICBM.

It is astonishing how Gen. Sundarji arrived at such a modest estimate. K. Subrahmanyam has closely followed Gen. Sundarji's tactics by his juggling of statistics to prove that India's defence spending has come down from 3.9% to 2.4% of the GDP. He also argues that the spending on conventional forces could be reduced considerably if India acquired nuclear weapon capability. If we go by the experience of the United States which invested over 6 trillion U.S. dollars to create a nuclear deterrent, it has been spending over 7% of its $300 billion defence budget on its conventional forces. China's reduction of conventional forces by one million have reasons other than the possession of nuclear weapons.

Since Deve Gowda has indicated that economic development and anti-poverty programmes will be given top priority, the bomb lobby's game plan is clear: to disorient this economic agenda by bringing into focus their hidden agenda for a full-fledged nuclear weapon programme. They resurrect the old arguments: the Sino-Pak nuclear collaboration and U.S. indifference or complicity. Though social science has provided several analytical tools, this determined group has deliberately chosen selective analysis and biased research to prove their point. But this is not the first time their analysis has faltered because they have chosen the wrong analytical tools for their research methodology. When the Iran-Iraq war began they predicted that it would not last even a week. We all know this turned out to be sheer absurdity, as the war dragged on for over eight years. Similarly, just one day before the Gulf War, a solemn pronouncement appeared on the front page of The Hindustan Times that there was no likelihood of war at least for the next three or four months whereas the Gulf war started the very next day!

During the NPT Review and Extension Conference in May 1995, they claimed that it would fail and an alternative NPT would be in order. It is pointless to add what happened to all these prophesies. Now these prophets of doom are again at it when the CTBT is being negotiated. This is the one treaty, (unlike the NPT which we vigorously opposed from the very beginning) in which we have a vital stake as it is our own baby. Even in 1993, when India and the United States co-sponsored the CTBT Resolution at the UN General Assembly, we gave an assurance that we would not insist on a time bound elimination of nuclear weapons as a pre-condition for serious test ban negotiations. Will the Deve Gowda government be hustled into actions which would

amount to withdrawing from our solemn commitment to a CTBT through over 80 UN resolutions, because of pressure from the nuclear weapon lobby?

The two issues on which India has stuck out its neck at the CD negotiations of CTBT are the laboratory tests, including sub-critical tests, and the time bound elimination of nuclear weapons. I.K. Gujral can easily afford to be flexible on these issues; if it is visualised as a maximalist stand India has taken for a negotiating strategy. It is absurd to insist that laboratory tests which have civilian implications should be banned. The Indian delegation at Geneva should, therefore, be advised to go along with the other delegations who all agree on the zero-yield CTBT. India stands to gain nothing by chasing the mirage of a time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons.

The United States in its entire history of arms control negotiations has not yielded to this demand. Sub-critical tests, according to knowledgeable scientific opinion, do not release nuclear energy and whatever small quantity of nuclear energy is released as a natural phenomenon is not sufficient to melt the core of 5 kg. of plutonium to produce mini-or micro-nuclear warheads. Their only use is to test the safety and reliability of existing nuclear stockpiles. However, an attempt can be made to persuade the U.S. government to give up its insistence on sub-critical tests for saving the CTBT. In any case, it is not advisable for India to run away from the CTBT after having worked hard over the last 40 year for the materialization of such a treaty. China will yield on its stand on PNE, if not, we should oppose it along with all other members of the CD. Otherwise, India's total isolation is certain.

The economic argument in favour of signing the CTBT and retaining our policy of nuclear restraint is far more compelling. It is pertinent to remind ourselves what the renowned Pakistani economist, Mahbub ul Haq has observed: 'The lesson of Cold War rivalry is not that capitalism triumphed over communism, but that political power not backed by economic strength is not sustainable. The Soviet Union collapsed because it could not feed its people; all its tanks, submarines and secret service meant nothing. Today India has the largest number of poor people in the world.' According to Haq, India and Pakistan together spend over 20 billion U.S. dollars per annum. This is twice the defence spending of Saudi Arabia which is 25 times richer than both.

There are thousands of villages in India and Pakistan where pure drinking water is still not available. Rural India is plagued by primitive living conditions such as ill-health, insanitary conditions, abject poverty, denial of social justice, illiteracy economic inequities and unemployment. Unless India emerges as a strong economic power and makes rapid strides in the elimination of poverty from its rural areas, the threat to India's security will come from within, not its neighbours. Internal non-military threats to India due to poverty, population explosion, unemployment and economic and social inequities on the one hand and internal military threats arising from secessionists and fragmentation politics are a greater danger to India today than any perceived nuclear threat from outside. Will the Deve Gowda government succumb to the pressures of the power elite, to revise his economic priorities for the elimination of poverty from rural India, go for the more expensive business of building the bomb and re-start a nuclear arms race in South Asia? The very survival of the Deve Gowda government will depend entirely on his native instincts and political will to escape from this premeditated designs of the bomb lobby.

Security means economic well being and without economic security military security is meaningless. India's present policy of nuclear restraint provides the best insurance against any nuclear threat from her neighbours. Therefore, the Deve Gowda government should examine all other options – diplomacy, confidence building, political understanding for the resolution of all outstanding disputes – instead of plunging into a Quixotic nuclear policy revision exercise just to please the power elite who in their utter disdain and virtual contempt for the poor would advise the Deve Gowda government: 'Well, Gowda, if they don't have bread, let them eat nukes.'

In the entire history of arms control negotiations, before or after the Second World War, only Hitler's Germany withdrew from a disarmament conference. The advocates of the bomb lobby are now urging the Deve Gowda government to follow the same course of action at the current Geneva negotiations on CTBT. Ironically enough, the rationale of Hitler's withdrawal from the world disarmament conference (1932-33), held at the same conference hall in Geneva, has striking resemblance to K. Subrahmanyam's fears: the perils to national security. The disastrous events which followed Hitler's fateful decision is now a part of history. Suffice to say that India too would be plunging into disaster if it decides to follow in the footsteps of Hitler.

Several myths have been built around the CTBT by the nuclear hawks in India to deliberately mislead the country. First, they argue that CTBT is a disarmament treaty. This is a pure and simple distortion of facts. Conceptually, the CTBT is an arms control measure. The treaty is the consummation of the efforts of all nations led by India since 1954 to ban all nuclear tests. India, therefore, supported the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) and was the first to sign the Treaty in 1963. India agreed with other nations that the goal of nuclear disarmament should be kept under the preambular paragraphs, while supporting over 80 UN resolutions, on Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB), India explicitly stated on several occasions at the UN that the CTB will only be 'an initial step' toward the final goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Rajiv Gandhi Action Plan for a nuclear free and non-violent world presented to the UN General Assembly in 1988, brought into focus the concept of a 3-stage, time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons by 2010, under a new nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT,

Article VI) and not under the CTBT. In 1993, when India and the United States co-sponsored the UN Resolution on CTBT, the former assured the latter that it will not insist on a time bound elimination of nuclear weapons. While paying lip service to the final elimination of nuclear weapons has become a customary ritual at the UN arms control negotiations, it is utterly irresponsible to mislead the nation by saying that the CTBT has a legal obligation to do so. Not even one nuclear warhead would be abolished under the CTBT.

Secondly, it is ironic that these peddlers of a nuclear weapon programme for the last thirty years have no qualms of conscience while preaching the gospel of disarmament. They are no different from the nuclear hawks of the NWSs who are ready to eat 'nukes' for breakfast if bread is not available in the country. These knowledgeable nuclear experts know that the CTBT is an arms control measure with a specific and limited mandate to ban all nuclear tests in all environments. The language in the PTBT and the latest draft Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, prepared by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Test Ban, Jaap Ramaker, the Dutch Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, is the same: 'Each state Party undertakes not to conduct nuclear explosion'. India did not raise the hue and cry about the PTBT that it is doing today about the CTBT, with the well-orchestrated cacophony about disarmament.

As far as the CTBT is concerned, Indian policy has been to support it with the full knowledge that it is not a disarmament treaty. The only difference is this: at the time of the PTBT India did not have a nuclear weapon programme whereas today it is a *de facto* nuclear weapon state. In that case, the honest course for India would have been to stay out of the CTBT negotiations *ab initio* rather than using it for dumping all sorts of proposals whether relevant to the CTBT or not. All nations, including nuclear weapon states and *de facto* nuclear weapon powers, are interested in the elimination of nuclear weapons, but the CTBT is not the instrument to bring about the final elimination of this perennial problem.

As a matter of fact, India which is so experienced in arms control negotiations, knows fully well that it is wasting its energy on this unattainable goal through the CTBT. The question thus is: Why is it then doing so? Is it to deliberately obstruct the CTBT negotiations? Will India go to the extent of vetoing the approval of the CTBT by the CD? Or, will it withdraw from the negotiations at the final stage?

Thirdly, the nuclear hawks argue that if India signs the CTBT, its security will be endangered. But is this true? India's security threat comes, according to them, from nuclear China and Sino-Pakistan nuclear collaboration. There is, indeed, a perceived nuclear threat from both. India should keep its options open to deal with any future nuclear threats from these neighbours. But why should India oppose the CTBT? The Chinese Lop Nor test was held way back in 1964. Then why did India not go nuclear for 32 years? India took 10 years to conduct a nuclear test after the Chinese had done it. Why did we stop with a single nuclear test in 1974? India could have become a full-fledged nuclear weapon state by now, but there was no such plan to do so.

We undoubtedly have superior nuclear and missile capability against Pakistan. Thus we are not concerned about the Pakistani threat even though we repeat it *ad nauseum* for propaganda. By refusing to join the CTBT, does India feel more secure against the Chinese? What will be the cost of a nuclear deterrent against the Sino-Pak nuclear collusion? How long will it take to build such a capability after rejecting the CTBT? What could be the additional cost in terms of economic sanctions, political and economic isolation by the international community, high technology denials and refusal of capital investments? If India is treated as a 'rogue state' after its refusal to sign the CTBT, it will have only its nuclear hawks to blame.

The reality is that the CTBT is only an arms control measure. Its objectives are confined to stop the qualitative arms race and ending the vertical proliferation of the NWSs and the horizontal proliferation of the *de facto* nuclear weapon powers. Within these clearly defined parameters of the CTBT, India should demonstrate a positive approach to the treaty, bargain hard for further refinement of the text and stick to a maximalist position until America compromises on the sub-critical test issue, and non-explosive (laboratory) tests. India should work with the G-21 nations to get the consent of the P-5 for the setting up of an ad hoc committee on the elimination of nuclear weapons. Simultaneously India must withdraw its demand for a time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons and allow the CD to pursue that goal through a parallel negotiating machinery set up by the UN General Assembly. Though this long term goal is not attainable through the CTBT, India can continue with its campaign for general and complete disarmament until nuclear weapons are finally abolished by all nations.

By sensationalizing the inaccurate media reports about the Sino-Pak nuclear axis (including the latest reported deployment of 'nuclear tipped' M-11 missiles by Pakistan), a nuclear threat to India's security will not arise. It is based on more accurate and hard evidence. What is not getting adequate media attention is what Pakistan feels about India's nuclear and missile threat. India's nuclear hawks do not want to make a mutual nuclear threat assessment. Otherwise, they would not have sensationalized the Sino-Pak nuclear 'conspiracy' against India when the CTBT is being finalized. Sino-Pak nuclear deals date back to the 1980s. To rake up this old story is to make the CTBT infructuous in the name of a security trap.

A national consensus can be built around the decision to support the CTBT while retaining its *de facto* nuclear weapon status. India's security problems can be resolved only through bilateral negotiations with Pakistan and China.

The Deve Gowda government must not allow itself to be trapped by the nuclear weapon lobby's rhetoric which makes no strategic sense. For one thing, the Sino-Indian nuclear weapon asymmetry is really unbridgeable. But if India still wants to become an overt nuclear weapon state, to place the blame on the CTBT and disarmament is sheer hypocrisy. Moreover, India will have no credibility to initiate discussions on disarmament in the future after abandoning the CTBT. What is at stake is India's honour as a nation which stands by its solemn commitments for a nuclear test ban.

India made a volte-face at the CTBT negotiations on 20 June 1996 when Arundhati Ghose, India's chief delegate at Geneva, told the Conference on Disarmament (CD) that India rejected the CTBT in its present form, as 'our national security considerations become a key factor in our decision-making' and as it was 'not in India's national security interest'. The build up for this anticlimax was meticulously masterminded by the hardliners on the CTBT during the twilight period when the Narasimha Rao government was replaced by the BJP government, followed by the Deve Gowda government in quick succession. When crucial decisions on the CTBT were kept in suspended animation during this time of transition, nuclear hawks managed to plug in their own line of thinking through the nexus they have built within the Foreign Office.

The consensus evolved by Prime Minister Deve Gowda through consultations with leaders of political parties on the CTBT, was in reality a *fait accompli*, in view of the position already outlined by the bomb lobby on CTBT. The statement by India's Foreign Secretary Salman Haider, earlier on 21 March at the CD meeting in Geneva was in marked contrast to Arundhati Ghose's announcement on 20 June. He said: 'We do not believe that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is essential for our national security and we have followed a conscious decision in this regard.' This was criticized by some nuclear hawks as well as the BJP. Had the BJP stayed in power, Salman Haider in all probability would have lost his job. It also suggests that Arundhati Ghose's national security thesis was an afterthought and essentially some sort of a rethinking exercise on nuclear policy.

As it was the Narasimha Rao government's decision in 1994 to participate in the CD negotiations on the CTBT at Geneva, Salman Haider's statement was only a reaffirmation of India's traditional nuclear policy. India's continued support for a comprehensive test ban for the past 40 years had *not* been regarded as incompatible with its national security by successive Indian governments. Some retired bureaucrats and nuclear scientists (now crusaders of India's nuclear weapon programme) were then playing second fiddle to their political masters in favour of a comprehensive test ban. There was hardly any indication that a comprehensive test ban treaty would be detrimental to India's security until Arundhati Ghose pronounced it so. It is a strange coincidence that the scales should have fallen from the eyes of these neo-realists only on the eve of the CTBT negotiations.

India's dramatic decision to reverse its stand on the CTBT is undoubtedly a retrogressive step. But a closer scrutiny of this weird about turn shows that it was certainly not guided by any intention to capture the high moral ground. In fact, the Narasimha Rao government had a more positive negotiating strategy at the CD – that India should honour its commitments to a comprehensive test ban and abide by the principle of international law: *pacta sunt servanda*, as it was in India's own security interests. But the subtle manoeuvres of the bomb lobby and their sustained campaign against the CTBT during the period of political uncertainty after the defeat of the Narasimha Rao government, made it almost impossible for any new government to resist their pressure for long. They succeeded in making the CTBT a 'weapon of domination', effectively used by the NWSs to de-robe the threshold nuclear weapon states like India of their nuclear option.

The BJP government's brief spell at the centre brightened their chances further to unceremoniously dump the CTBT. When the Deve Gowda government finally took over the reins of power, a negative decision about the CTBT was already on the anvil. As though some *rebus sic stantibus* situation had already overtaken the country, political parties reacted to the CTBT with indescribable hostility. The nuclear hawks not only succeeded in manipulating the bureaucrats, but also the political leaders through a well coordinated media blitzkrieg. Two other factors made their task easier: their proximity to I.K. Gujral, the Foreign Minister; and their under-estimation of Prime Minister Deve Gowda as a pliable, soft and vulnerable politician who knew very little about nuclear weapons. Hence, it was a pyrrhic victory for the bomb lobby when India announced on 19 June that it will not accept the CTBT in its present form, though it will not withdraw from the negotiations at Geneva.

Suddenly, India's well trumpeted disarmament agenda, announced by Foreign Secretary Salman Haider, has been relegated to the background. His new briefs will be fine tuned to reflect India's changing perception of the CTBT.

Indeed, it is India's sovereign right to reject an international agreement which is not in its national interest. If India does not want to give up its nuclear option, that is her decision. Nobody can force the CTBT on India. Then why the high drama at Geneva? Why all this moral posturing on disarmament? Why did India drag everybody into the CTBT negotiations, only to later blame everybody and at the last minute run away from signing it? India could have been more transparent about its intentions instead of playing the hallowed martyr. No wonder India got the treatment it received at Geneva for the shoddy manner in which it conducted its negotiations. The votary of the CTBT has become its worst critic, while its opponents have turned supporters. Never mind that India conceived the CTBT; never mind that India campaigned for it for more than four decades. History does not matter now because India's national security considerations have become a key factor!

The intellectual godfathers of the national security thesis are the same nuclear hawks who wanted India to play the 'spoiler's' game at Geneva in order to obstruct and sabotage the CTBT negotiations. But now, India has been trapped by its own pontificating. Russia, China, UK, France, Pakistan and Egypt argue that there will be no CTBT without India. According to them, only if the five nuclear weapon states and three threshold nuclear weapon states (India, Pakistan and Israel) ratify the CTBT, it will enter into force (EIF). After having ruined India's image as a country which honours international commitments, the next logical step of the bomb lobby will be to pressurize the Deve Gowda government to declare India an overt nuclear weapon state and resume nuclear testing simultaneously.

Like Alice in Wonderland, India's new generation of nuclear experts (who have only a casual acquaintance with the theories of international politics) is busy creating a completely military oriented ramshackle structure of national security with their spurious reasoning which might appear to be relevant to the Indian people. But this is likely to end up killing the goose which lays golden egg. What is the use of building a mighty war machine with nuclear weapons if the state cannot provide the basic necessities of life to its starving millions? After all, military security without economic or social security is meaningless in a poor country like India. India is already the fourth biggest military power in the world. There are limits to military power as well.

There may be resistance in India for staying out of the CTBT. Similarly, there may be a consensus in keeping our nuclear option. But beyond this, especially on the question of going nuclear, there is no national consensus. Left parties like the CPI(M), CPI and Congress (I) for instance, do not support such a policy. Of course, the BJP is the only political party which shares the enthusiasm of the nuclear hawks to instantly declare that India should become a full-fledged nuclear weapon state.

The tyranny of a microscopic minority of power elite cannot arbitrarily decide the fate of our nuclear policy which is bound to have far reaching consequences to India's national security. There should be a proper scientific, political, economic and strategic assessment of the nature and scope of the present nuclear threat, if any, to India's security as a first step prior to a decision to revise India's nuclear policy. There should be a national debate about our present nuclear policy. The Indian parliament should debate, review and decide whether a shift in our nuclear policy is called for.

If a decision to go nuclear has to be taken, how much thinking has already gone into it must first be ascertained. It is important to know the level of scientific, technological, economic, strategic and defence preparedness existing in support of a modest nuclear weapon programme. We have to know whether our nuclear scientists in laboratories like BARC, are ready to conduct a series of nuclear tests now. How long will it take for our nuclear scientists to produce small, light weight fission bombs that can be used in our dual capable, short range Prithvi and medium range Agni? When will our delivery systems like Agni be ready for deployment? How long will it take for the deployment of an operational nuclear force? How long will it take for our command, control, communications and intelligence to be operational?

Apart from these purely technical questions, it is equally important to work out the economic cost of building a small nuclear force. Then we have to decide the actual size of a nuclear force which will be sufficient as a minimum deterrent against China. Have we thought through the Chinese strategic response to India's nuclear force capability? We have also to work out the political, economic and strategic costs as a fall out effect of sanctions by the P-5 against us and due to the isolation by the international community. All these and many more imponderables have to go into a cost-benefit analysis if India decides to launch an overt nuclear weapon programme, instead of joining the CTBT.

Dispelling some myths

CHITRAPU UDAY BHASKAR

THE negotiations for a Comprehensive Teat Ban Treaty (CTBT) in Geneva and the concurrent debate in India have had a salutary effect in clearing many of the myths and misapprehensions that envelop the post Cold War nuclear discourse. India's refusal to sign the treaty in its present form was conveyed to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on 20 June and it is expected that negotiations will continue from 29 July onwards when the CD convenes again after a month long break.

India's resolve not to sign the CTBT in its present form was reiterated by the Indian Foreign Minister I K Gujral in Parliament on 15 July, where he stated that the new draft of the CTBT (also referred to as the Ramaker version after the President of the CD) – does not attend to the issues that India has been raising. He added: 'Therefore we cannot endorse it (Ramaker draft of CTBT) or accept the text in its present form. We will remain engaged in the discussions when these resume on 29 July in order to ensure that our freedom of action is not constrained in any manner. Our approach will remain a responsible approach, but we have to safeguard our national interest. If other countries reach their own consensus, that is their sovereign decision. We would expect that all countries will respect our decision and ensure that the Treaty with which we will not be associated, *will not impose any obligations on India.*' (emphasis added; *The Hindu*, 17 July 1996).

To that extent it is evident that India does not wish to be forced into blocking the CTBT at the CD and would like to disassociate itself from the treaty as long as the objectionable Entry Into Force (EIF) clause is deleted. Both the nature of this EIF and the larger backdrop of the CTBT need to be scrutinized to better appreciate India's predicament and the need to strengthen the resolve to block the CTBT – if need be – in the final negotiations at Geneva.

The EIF clause in the Ramaker draft is unprecedented in international law in that it is inherently coercive in attempting to rope in nations dissenting with the final draft. The EIF reads:

* The views expressed are personal and not those of the Institute

'1. This Treaty shall enter into force 180 days after the date of deposit of the instruments of ratification by all States listed in Annex 2 to this Treaty, but in no case earlier than two years after its opening for signature.

2. If this Treaty has not entered into force three years after the date of the anniversary of its opening for signature, the Depository shall convene a Conference of the states that have already deposited their instruments of ratification on the request of a majority of those states. That Conference shall examine the extent to which the requirement set out in paragraph 1 has been met and shall consider and decide by consensus *what measures* consistent with international law may be undertaken to *accelerate* (emphasis added) the ratification process in order to facilitate the early entry into force of this Treaty.' (Ramaker draft page 42 document CD/NTB/WP. 330/ Rev 1; 28 June 1996.)

This is an ominous twist to the nature of the debate for far from trying to accommodate India's genuine reservations regarding what it perceives to be the negative consequences of the CTBT on its national interest, the Ramaker draft not only insists on forcing India to get on board by naming it as one of the nations in annex 2, but uses suasive methodologies to intimidate a reluctant signatory. If the CTBT in its present form is endorsed by the CD and sent to the UN, it can be construed as part of global law/international treaties dealing with nuclear non-proliferation issues. From here the inferences can become oppressive from India's view for it was only in July 1995 that Argentina had presented a draft resolution to the UNSC seeking to affirm the Security Council's special responsibility to address the threat of nuclear proliferation and take appropriate measures in case of any confirmed violations of relevant international treaties and conventions. It requests annual reports from the UN Secretary General on this issue to be submitted to the Council. And as the doyen of disarmament studies in India notes: 'This (draft resolution) is a surreptitious effort to turn the five permanent members at the Council into the nuclear policemen of the world. India has rightly protested about the manner in which this proposal has been circulated as well as against its sinister implications.' (see Matin Zuberi, 'Nuclear Weapons: a threat to human security', *USI Journal* Vol. CXXVI Jan.-March 1996).

The manner in which counter-proliferation is getting enshrined and interpreted in keeping with the dominant Western view, it may not be invalid to conjecture that if the CTBT is allowed to pass in its present form, the UNSC could well invoke Chapter VII of the UN Charter – Action with respect to threats to the peace or breaches to the peace of the world. Thus, in effect, by allowing itself to be coerced into a treaty which it perceives to be detrimental to its core national interests, India would either have to sacrifice those core interests for a 'larger global good' – or alternatively take recourse to such actions as may be deemed a threat to global peace and then invite censure upon itself – a classic Catch 22 situation. In other words, India has to decide whether to draw a line now at the final stages of the CTBT negotiations and ensure that the EIF clause does not paint it into a corner, or draw a line two years down the road and not sign/ratify a treaty that it was not party to but was unwilling to block.

This extreme scenario is not as far fetched as it seems at this stage for counter proliferation has become the new priority for the USA in the post Cold War as reflected in the 110-page document entitled *Proliferation: Threat or Response* released by the Pentagon on 11 April this year. The report in essence states that nuclear weapons will remain the exclusive domain of the Nuclear Five – also the Permanent Five of the UNSC – and that nations attempting to acquire such capability will be 'deterred' by a mix of persuasion, coercion and export controls – and if these methods fail – by 'exploring a variety of military means'.

If the EIF clause represents the immediacy of the CTBT and underlines the need for India to take a firm stand in not being intimidated or browbeaten – sundry demarches notwithstanding – the macro view of the post Cold War global nuclear discourse in which the treaty is located suggests that many of the claims about the CTBT and its desirability are either exaggerated or untenable.

The mandate of the CTBT is unambiguous and reads as: 'The Conference directs the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate intensively a universal and multilaterally and effectively verifiable comprehensive test-ban treaty, which would *contribute effectively to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects, to the process of nuclear disarmament* and therefore to the enhancement of international peace an security.' (CD document CD/1238 of 25 January 1994 reproduced in SIPRI Yearbook 1995, p. 697; emphasis added). This mandate was the final operational directive of an idea mooted by India in 1954 to ban nuclear testing as a means towards ultimate global disarmament and the spirit of the mandate is indeed laudable.

However, a closer scrutiny of the areas emphasized – the 'effective' contribution to the 'prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects' and 'the process of nuclear disarmament' reveals an entirely different picture when contrasted against the actions and words of the nuclear weapon states (NWS). In the first instance, the eternal extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in May 1995 with no binding obligations on the part of the NWS towards disarmament as mandated in Article VI of the NPT – 'Each of the Parties to the Treaty (NPT) undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control' – has led to an interpretation wherein it is suggested that the NWS now have a legitimate right to possess nuclear weapons; that this right will eternally be denied to the non-NWS; and that these nuclear weap-

ons are central and inescapable for the post Cold War security of the NWS. The centrality of the nuclear weapon as an instrument of power and security and hence as the dominant currency of post Cold War relevance has become part of the realist lexicon whatever the anti-nuclearists and like-minded NGOs may claim. This comprehension of 'realism' among practitioners of state policy is amply evidenced in U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry's assertion in a major policy speech (6 February): 'We cannot give up our deterrence capability, our own nuclear capability. We can reduce dramatically but I do not see a prospect of ever bringing that down to zero in the foreseeable future.'

This reliance on nuclear weapons to ensure their respective security interests and that of their militarily dependent allies has been repeatedly emphasized by all senior officials of the NWS and as always, the most unambiguous assertion comes from the U.S. whose candour on nuclear matters is commendable. In recent testimony, Harold Smith, U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense for nuclear, chemical and biological defense programs, reiterated that nuclear weapons even at significantly reduced levels 'remain a core component of future (American) national security strategy.' He unveiled the essential elements of the Stockpile Stewardship and Management Program (SSMP) under which the U.S. President while supporting the CTBT in Geneva, mandated the Department of Energy to:

1) maintain nuclear weapons capability without underground testing or the production of fissile material;

2) develop a stockpile surveillance engineering base;

3) demonstrate the capability to refabricate and certify weapon types in the enduring stockpile;

4) maintain the capability to *design, fabricate and certify new warheads;* (emphasis added)

5) maintain a science and technology base;

6) ensure tritium availability; and

7) accomplish these tasks with no new-design nuclear warhead production. (see *USIA Wireless File,* 31 May 1996).

The SSMP also includes expanded computational capability such as the Accelerated Strategic Computing Initiative, above-ground experimental facilities, sub-critical plutonium experimental facilities at the Nevada Test Site and the ability to return to underground testing. In essence the strategy is one of lead-hedge-surge – that is, *lead* in imposing global arms control and non-proliferation measures but retain the ability to *hedge* and return to START I levels if required; and finally *surge* to higher plateaus of nuclear adequacy if mandated.

Be that as it may, the Strategic Arms Reductions Treaty (START) related reduction in the global nuclear arsenal and the permanent extension of the NPT are often interpreted as major disarmament measures and the CTBT is similarly packaged. It is repeatedly stressed in numerous fora that START I and II have reduced the strategic arsenals of the former superpowers and that from a menacing figure of about 20,000 warheads cumulatively, this figure will come down to a less menacing – almost benign figure of 6,500 warheads by the year 2003 – if all the stages of ratification and reduction are not obstructed by any of the domestic compulsions prevailing in the U.S. and Russia.

However, these developments have to be contextualised to meaningfully evaluate and comprehend their strategic relevance for each nation-state. The strategic warheads for the USA and the former Soviet Union (FSU) in September 1990 and July 1995 are as follows: U.S. 10,563 and 8,711 respectively; FSU – 10,271 and 6,833. The arsenals of France, UK and China remain unchanged quantitatively and are being modernized qualitatively. The moot question is: will these reductions materially alter the strategic context for India? The short answer must be in the negative.

The ground reality is that the nuclear deterrent will be increasingly sea-based and today the USA has 4,256 warheads in submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) and Russia fields 2,536 such warheads. Even when all the cuts envisaged in START I and II are taken to their conclusion, the percentage of those 6,500 warheads in submarines will be almost 70% or two thirds, suggesting that the ultimate deterrent in the post Cold War will be the submarine launched ballistic missile. It may be safely assumed that these weapons will be around till the year 2050 and the elusive Indian national interest has to be defined in these turbulent strategic waters.

Interestingly enough, the three medium nuclear powers – France, UK and China are also embarking upon a similar path and one of those less acknowledged anomalies of START I and II was that when the fine print is read carefully, what these arms reduction treaties did in effect was to no doubt scale back in numbers but they also allowed the legitimisation of the SLCM – the submarine launched cruise missile (the cruise missile differs from the ballistic missile and was used with devastating impact in the 1991 Gulf War for Kuwait). Thus the former Soviet Union which had no SLCMs during START negotiations can now acquire these weapons as Russia, as part of the disarmament visualized in START.

However, this trend is not to be derided but recognised as the logical symbiotic relationship between technology and strategy contextualised in a changing geo-political environment. The formal approval accorded by Paris (26 April) to induct a new strategic nuclear missile, the M5 , to replace the existing M45 SLBMs (submarine launched ballistic missile) is instructive about post Cold War nuclear realities and the determination of medium powers to protect their core national security interests and perceived autonomy in the changing global order.

The announcement itself was terse and set at rest the speculation that France would ultimately abandon the ambitious M5 SLBM programme that received its initial seed funding as far back as in 1988. The need to replace the M45/TN 71 was intensely debated in the French strategic community and given the compulsions of domestic/European politics, a resource

crunch that entailed a reduced defence outlay and the changed geo-political ambience in the aftermath of the Cold War, the M5 had a chequered evolution. With this announcement to commit 1.3 billion francs (US $ 253 million) for developmental expenses, it is envisaged that by the year 2010, the M45/TN 71 will be replaced by the more capable and modern M5 SLBM.

Before scrutinizing the technical characteristics of the SLBM, it is instructive to note the emergence of a post Cold War nuclear reality among the major powers – the linkage between a perceived autonomous foreign/security policy profile and an independent nuclear weapon capability. Notwithstanding the rhetoric that accompanies related global discourse about the purported marginalisation of the nuclear weapon in international relations, the reality is quite different. Apart from the U.S. and Russia which are still in the heavy nuke league, the lesser nuclear powers are pursuing a modest nuclear/missile modernisation programme with unwavering determination.

The French M5 is the most recent instance and earlier in January the Royal Navy unveiled its submarine launched sub-strategic single warhead nuclear missile that was being tested for certain post Cold War contingencies. Don't the French and the British have the assurance of the U S. nuclear umbrella, one may ask. While the answer is in the affirmative, both nations have concluded that they still need to maintain an independent nuclear deterrent outside of the formidable U.S. capability and the logical answer based on techno-strategic considerations is to invest in a submarine launched missile.

While Britain is constrained in its nuclear initiatives by being bound to the U.S. for its testing and missile design, France has traditionally followed an independent path and the more recent nuclear testing in the South Pacific was case in point. These tests now fall into place, for it was evident even then that France wished to replace the M45 with an improved missile and the last round of tests were necessary to refine the warhead design/performance.

While the Cold War validated the concept of second strike and Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) between the two military alliances through the nuclear triad – land, air and sea/submarine launched missiles – the post Cold War has led to a new geo-political and nuclear deterrence pattern. Strategic arms reduction has been effected and a shift is discernible wherein the strategic deterrent will finally be concentrated in submarine launched missiles.

As always the U.S. leads the pack with its Trident D5 SLBM which has incredible characteristics. The missile is fired by a three-stage solid fuel rocket with stellar inertial guidance that allows it to cover a range of 12,000 km. This American SLBM has a 12 MIRV rating – that is multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles which in layman's terms means the ability for one missile to engage 12 independent targets. This lethality is heightened by the thermonuclear warhead of 100-120 kiloton capability and an accuracy of 90 mts CEP – circular error probable.

Unlike the British who have fitted the U.S. Trident on their submarines, the French have developed their own SLBM and the three stage solid fuel rocket fired M45 is a respectable weapon with a range of 5,300 km; 6 MIRV; 150 kiloton thermonuclear warhead. Designing and testing SLBMs is expensive and arduous and the first successful submerged launch of the M45 took place only in February 1995. However, the need for an improved missile was accepted and the M5 is expected to have a 11,000 km range with 10-12 MIRV rating and a far better CEP. If realized as per design, the M5 will be comparable with the Trident and in a sense, the French are ensuring that their autonomy vis-a-vis the sole hegemon or an adversary 15 years down the road will not be compromised.

China apart, all the other nuclear powers are scrapping their land-based/air launched nuclear missiles and are moving underwater into nuclear submarine/SLBM terrain. On current evidence it would be prudent to infer that the nuclear SLBM capability will be the most viable and least expensive insurance policy for a major state that wishes to preserve some semblance of autonomy/independence in its foreign/security policies.

Going back to the Royal Navy, the HMS Victorious – the latest nuclear submarine in the UK inventory – successfully tested its single warhead sub-strategic missile on 7 January 1996. Analyzing the compulsions behind this development what one notes is a subtle doctrinal shift in nuclear theology. The core mission of nuclear weapons is being quietly enhanced to address non-nuclear threats and whether it is General Colin Powell's admission that a nuclear response was being contemplated in the 1991 Gulf War in the event of an Iraqi chemical/biological weapon attack or the present UK initiative (France incidentally has voiced similar views) – the trend is clear. Nuclear weapons are being liberated from their *core* mission which in the Cold War was only to deter other nuclear weapons.

Today the core mission has been unilaterally enhanced to include non-nuclear contingencies and for instance the UK report, *The Role of British nuclear weapons after the Cold War* (released 10 April 1996) is not adverse to use such lethal weaponry in regional contingencies 'even some involving non-nuclear powers.'

The RN acquiring this sub-strategic capability at considerable expense when the UK is addressing more serious economic/fiscal setbacks is indicative of the premium placed on the nuclear weapon; and the breaching of the sanctity of the core mission is clear in the commentary which speaks of an 'enduring belief that nuclear weapons are just another category of weapons rather than something entirely different.' The French have also appropriated similar 'strategic space' to meet any unforeseen exigency and the Russians have a similar refrain – though not as explicitly.

Alone among the NWS, China is still committed to the doctrine of 'no-first-use' and this acknowledgment of the special status to be accorded to nuclear weapons is in keeping with the International Court

of Justice's non-binding, advisory ruling (8 July) that 'the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict.' However, as in the case of the NPT extension, this opinion is not binding and the NWS led by the U.S. have been sharply critical of this judgment.

The Indian security predicament has to be located in this context, where the possession of nuclear weapons elevates the state concerned beyond any kind of binding norm or legislation. For India the security dimension of the nuclear weapon became a stark reality in 1964 when China acquired this capability. The sheer presence of this capability with Beijing distorted the politico-military space in which the post-1962 Sino-Indian relationship was evolving and India was in effect being pushed down the ladder of subalternity with every qualitative/quantitative improvement/enhancement of the Chinese nuclear arsenal. This reality cannot be ignored and strands pertaining to reductions in the arsenals of the USA and Russia are quite irrelevant as far as India's core vulnerability is concerned.

This matrix has been further compounded by the clandestine nuclear weapon quest of Pakistan – encouraged tacitly by the U.S. on one hand and actively aided by China in terms of design and know-how on the other. India's geographical juxtaposition between these nuclear states is unique in the post Cold War and it is incredible that the world body is still indifferent or reluctant to this reality affecting India's core national interests.

While deriding the security that nuclear weapons provide or offer is an abiding post Cold War NGO preoccupation, no one doubts or denies the ability of nuclear weapons – or the possibility of an adversary acquiring them – instilling a feeling of deep insecurity. This is a post Cold War tenet that emerged after the 1991 Iraqi scare where it is now accepted that if Baghdad had the slightest modicum of a nuclear capability, the 1991 war would have played out differently. Today the U.S. exudes considerable anxiety regarding the nuclear aspirations of the so-called rogue states such as Iraq, Iran and Libya; neither UK nor France would be sanguine about a German nuclear capability; and both Russia and China are wary of the Japanese nuclear aspirations while the Arab states are uneasy with Israel's undeclared capability. While all these anxieties and insecurities are predicated on slim, low-probability potentialities, the Indian predicament is real and immediate. The vitiated nuclear environment cannot be denied by India's most severe critics and the linkages with state sponsored terrorism /adventurism abetted by a clandestine nuclear perch are more than familiar in the Indian litany.

The CTBT debate has to be located in this complex framework and one of the most encouraging fallouts of the domestic debate has been a review of the security component in India's nuclear posture. The absence of a clear and harmonious strategy that would relate the nuclear capability to India's commitment towards nuclear disarmament even while affording some sense of adequacy to the security predicament has been a perennial challenge to the Indian establishment. The present CTBT debate has brought many of these contradictions and challenges to the fore and India's commitment to time-bound disarmament is for the first time being specified in a reasonable time frame (ten years in an Indian proposal) to the CD. However, this should not make one ignore the Indian security situation in the interregnum between final disarmament – which for India will mean when the last Chinese nuclear warhead has been dismantled and verified – and the beginning of this momentous step.

The world today is not really moving towards disarmament but a prudent level of arms reduction by the NWS based on economic necessities. Simultaneously, arms control is being pursued relentlessly to 'lock everyone on the nuclear learning curve' through various regimes and treaties. The CTBT debate is not to be reduced to one of pitting India against the NWS – particularly the U.S. there are many complexities and undercurrents at play including the long-term challenge that China poses to the sole hegemon – the U.S. The sharp differences of opinion among the other NWS is evident in the fact that the EIF as it now stands was not at U.S. initiative but that of UK, China and Russia leading many to suggest that these NWS are using India as the fall guy to block the treaty.

While it is evident that the Indian nuclear capability in whatever form poses no threat to any U.S. interest, it is also clear that an equitable solution to the Indian predicament will run counter to the global nuclear non-proliferation norm that the U.S. is pursuing. A *modus vivendi* is possible where the interests and sensitivities of the principal interlocutors are respected but India should not be 'stampeded' into signing the CTBT for the wrong reasons. Pursuing or protecting one's perceived national interest is the *raison d'être* of the state and the highest morality for the individual. India's refusal to sign the CTBT in its present form has found support in some quarters though not reflected in official policy. One of the more perceptive and informed comments comes from Professor Stephen Cohen, easily the most acknowledged American expert on the intricacies of the subcontinent. Responding to the Indian decision, Cohen said that India was justified in not signing the CTBT and added: 'No sovereign nation is going to compromise its survival or its security for the sake of a treaty. I don't think you can regulate vital national interests by a law passed in Washington DC or even an international treaty in Geneva.' (*India Abroad*, 28 June 1996, pg. 14)

Nuclear disarmament will remain the elusive Holy Grail of the post Cold War world as major states pursue nuclear neo-realism – the more likely *leitmotif* and currency of relevance in the 21st century. India's commitment to disarmament is well-known and needs no endorsement. However, if India wishes to adhere to the power of this principle, it is imperative to comprehend the principle of power and sustain the realism that has finally permeated the Indian nuclear debate.

Secure without the bomb

KANTI BAJPAI

INDIA does not need nuclear weapons. It should neither produce them nor keep open the option to produce them. As Foreign Secretary Salman Haider argued, nuclear weapons do not give peoples – any peoples – security. At a time when there is a growing lobby in favour of going nuclear, it is worth making a reasoned statement on why it is not in India's interest to invest in the bomb and why, further, it is not in India's interest to keep the option open. Further, I shall suggest that India should give up the bomb unilaterally and that in doing so it could transform its relationship with Pakistan.

The first argument in favour of nuclear weapons is that they deter or balance the power of those who have nuclear weapons. In India's case, this means principally Pakistan and China.

Those who advocate an Indian bomb as a way of deterring the Pakistani bomb seem to invert history. India exploded a bomb in 1974. While there is some evidence that Pakistan was moving towards the acquisition of weapons capability before 1974, it is hardly unreasonable to suggest that if India had unambiguously closed off the nuclear option in the 1950s and 1960s the pressure on Islamabad to develop a nuclear capability would have been largely absent: this is a 'what if', of course, but not a risible or trivial one.

To declare that India needs the bomb to deter the Pakistani bomb is therefore somewhat perverse. Islamabad has stated publicly on many occasions that it will accept any de-nuclearising agreement or nuclear arms control measure that New Delhi is prepared to accept. One could see this as mere tactical manoeuvre, but if New Delhi did indeed give up the nuclear option the Pakistani 'bluff' would be called. It is difficult to see how in the court of world opinion as well as influential sectors of its own domestic opinion Islamabad could reject a deal, especially if it was accompanied by offers to negotiate on a variety of bilateral issues including the forging of postures of defensive sufficiency in conventional forces and a deepening of confidence building measures. A unilateral move to be rid of the bomb would also be a powerful psychological rupture, which could lead on to dramatic moves for India-Pakistan reconciliation.

An Indian bomb, it is argued, is necessary in any case to deter the Chinese bomb and achieve a balance of power: even if Pakistan was our friend and did not have a nuclear capability, there is always the Chinese threat. Let us leave alone the reply that from 1964 to 1974 India had learned to live with a nuclear China and seemed no worse for wear. Let us also leave alone the thought that, to the extent

that we have not deployed an operational weapon, we have lived with the Chinese bomb since 1974 with no great harm attaching to us. Let us ask instead: Is there a nuclear threat to India from China?

Chinese nuclear intimidation could occur in three kinds of circumstances. First of all, there remains the unresolved border dispute between the two countries. Second, internal instabilities in China could encourage external 'adventurism'. As the Chinese leadership struggles to assert or retain political control, it may be tempted to use external 'threats' to out-manoeuvre and discipline internal rivals. Third, the two countries, by virtue of their size and self-image, are likely to be perennial rivals for influence in Asia if not farther afield.

Nuclear asymmetry, it is thought, will strengthen Beijing's hand in each case. It will encourage obduracy over the border issue. Should instability in Tibet, and other areas of southern China, tempt the leadership to 'teach' India a lesson (as a way of rallying support domestically), this temptation will be reinforced by nuclear superiority. And China's nuclear confidence will enable it to enlarge its spheres of influence to India's detriment.

Each of these propositions bears examination. First, while the border dispute is unresolved in a formal sense, Beijing has got most of what it wanted out of the issue. If its primary aim was to secure the route from Xinkiang to Tibet, it long ago accomplished its goal. China is the satisfied power on the border issue, and it did not need nuclear weapons then, and does not need them now, to achieve its purpose. India will negotiate a border settlement with China eventually. But it is hard to see how nuclear weapons will help India get an accord.

Second, there is considerable room for debate over the internal-external linkage. Were internal factors truly responsible for Beijing's punitive wars against India and Vietnam? How vulnerable and unstable is China likely to be in the future? Opinions vary greatly here, but in any case the more serious question is: Can domestic political troubles be eased, in the new China, by external distractions? Finally, and most importantly, would war with India be credible, given that the only serious bilateral issue – the border – favours China; and would it help or hurt an insecure regime or leadership to raise an India bogey in such circumstances? I shall leave the answers to most of these questions to Indian Sinologists, but with respect to the last it seems to me that while Japan, Russia, and the United States could serve as rallying points in China, there is no evidence that India figures or is likely to figure high in China's threat cosmology.

Third, nuclear weapons as enhancing China's status is a hoary theme in Indian thinking, but the growing stature of that country is linked to quite different factors: the vitality and quality of its first generation leaders; the speed with which, after 1949, the new government asserted political control and embarked on social reforms; the dramatic improvements in the quality of physical life; the willingness to use force, as demonstrated by its interventions in Tibet and Korea in the 1950s and its defeat of India in 1962; the break with the Soviets in 1958; the increasing sophistication of its conventional forces over the past two decades; the dynamism of its economy over the past fifteen years; and, notwithstanding a certain measure of turbulence, overall political stability.

Nuclear weapons may not have hurt China's standing in world affairs; but to ascribe Chinese status and influence primarily to nuclear weapons is untenable. The rise of non-nuclear Germany and Japan as great powers and the decay and collapse of a nuclear-ridden Soviet Union further challenge the linkage between nuclear weapons, status, and influence. What is reasonably evident now is that a nuclear India would be unable to match China for status and influence unless it made important economic, social, political, and diplomatic changes. The real 'race' with China – if there is one – is civic and economic, not military and nuclear.

Even if this strategic reasoning is conceded, it might be argued: why give up the option to build the bomb? Why not preserve what has been called 'nuclear ambiguity', a neither-confirm-nor-deny posture, in which India does not go nuclear outright but continues more or less clandestinely to maintain a programme of research and development. In this view, India could move cheerily ahead, producing the various components of a usable device which could be fairly quickly fitted together. It could stay one step away from a full and overt weapons posture and achieve deterrence anyway because no one would know how close India is to a real, deliverable bomb – and they would not risk finding out. While this would seem to be a bloodless and attractive option, it is not.

First of all, over time, keeping the nuclear option open will seriously complicate India's strategic environment. The 'neither-confirm-nor-deny' posture of half-truths, hints, calculated leaks, and genuine revelations will persuade outsiders of two things: first, that India is virtually a nuclear weapons power, armed with an arsenal of 'short-order' devices which can be assembled and fired without inordinate delay; and second, that it possesses missiles capable of striking well beyond the region or near region.

If so, there is every chance that the nuclear powers will eventually target India with their nuclear weapons. It is of course true that these powers could point their weapons against a non-nuclear India; but surely an extraordinary set of circumstances must be conjured up. As India comes to be regarded as a nuclear power, however, the extraordinary could become the normal state of affairs: it could be targeted as part of the general deterrence posture of the nuclear powers. Among the nuclear powers, this may already be the case with China, which is believed to have missiles in Tibet pointed at India. In time, the U.S. and Russia may take similar decisions. Nuclear ambiguity may deter an equally ambiguous Pakistan, even China, but it may also expose India to several further layers of nuclear threat, thereby greatly increasing its strategic risk.

Ambiguity, in addition, may expose India to various non-nuclear threats. To persuade the Indian government to give up the ambiguity posture, the nuclear powers could exploit India's internal political problems, particularly its ethnic and religious divisions. Kashmir, Punjab, and the North East, in this regard, become distinct weaknesses. Other punishments might include economic sanctions and technology denials. At a crucial moment in its development, these could seriously undermine the Indian economy. There is a tendency to shrug off the potential threats to India's economic life. But we should be careful. As the last one year has shown there are vulnerabilities about. The fall of the rupee, the rise in the call back rate, the continuing fiscal deficit, the foreign debt, the mismanagement of oil pricing, all these are signs that India is far more precariously placed economically than one might suppose. India is not about to collapse but at a critical moment the international economy may be unwilling to come to the rescue as it did in 1991.

Second, while nuclear ambiguity may be 'deterrence stable' over some period of time, it may not be 'crisis stable'. Whereas uncertainty of nuclear retaliation may deter in the general course of things, in a crisis, which is an environment marked by the dangerous lack of certitude and by momentous decision-making under extreme stress, what is likely to be stabilising is a posture which is based on certainty of response. If one side or the other calculates that the other side's ambiguity is overly ambiguous, it might decide to strike first. At a critical moment, ambiguity may give its possessor a false sense of security and its opponent a false sense of opportunity.

It is instructive that an ambiguous nuclear posture has received less and less support from the Indian armed forces. Indian strategists may attribute this to a lack of understanding of deterrence on the part of the forces, but the problem likely goes much deeper. The forces must worry about what happens should deterrence break down. They find it difficult to countenance policy options which rest on the kinds of uncertainties India must live with in an ambiguous posture: If India has a non-weaponised deterrent, who, at a critical moment, will have control of the various components? How will the order to mate the components be validated, once again in the fog of 'neither peace nor war'? Should the components of a device be dispersed? In the event of a crisis, is this a stabilising or de-stabilising measure? How far does one disperse covert weapons or weapon components? How quickly does one need to mate the components of a non-weaponised device? If the components are dispersed, will they all be controlled by a single organisation or by different organisations? Which organisation(s)? How does one disperse a weaponised but covert device or an overt but non-weaponised device? How does one arrange to bring the components of a non-weaponised device together when necessary, especially in a crisis? Once brought together and mated, should they be dispersed and, if so, how and where? Should storage sites be hardened, or would hardening draw attention to the location of the sites?

Organisations must answer questions of control and responsibility such as these because that is why they were created, it is their *raison d'être*; those who are asked to carry out acts of great violence are even more insistent on clear delineation of control and responsibility. Ambiguity means living with a situation wherein these questions can at best be half answered. In a crisis, this would be a dangerous situation. In the long run, therefore, it is unlikely that deterrence by ambiguity is acceptable. Interestingly, in the wake of the CTBT negotiations, a campaign to end ambiguity has begun, with calls for testing and outright nuclearisation.

Third, nuclear ambiguity, as also other nuclear postures, cannot deter one of the most important sources of violence in the region, namely, insurgency and terrorism. Indeed, nuclear capability has made the region more hospitable for both forms of violence. With India and Pakistan at par in their ambiguous nuclear postures, New Delhi and Islamabad are more easily tempted to conclude that they are free to support insurgency and terrorism. On the other hand, if both sides abjured nuclear weapons, the temptation to make these kinds of calculations would be reduced. Both would have to reckon that the other might retaliate by 'hot pursuit' strikes, with the promise of escalation to outright conventional war. However, a strategy of conventional escalation, beyond some minimal level, becomes fraught with danger when nuclear weapons are or may be available to the enemy. In sum, nuclear weapons, declared or undeclared, make low-intensity subversion more attractive.

Fourth, keeping the nuclear option open as part of a deterrence posture contributes to the freezing of India-Pakistan relations. It postpones the day when the two sides must confront the fundamental causes of their quarrels and how those quarrels can be resolved short of war: why negotiate and compromise when you can simply stave the other side off? This sort of reckoning will entrench those on both sides who have an interest in permanent enmity, thereby prolonging the region's state of war. Keeping the option open therefore is simply to perpetuate a cold and negative peace.

In sum, India's policy of nuclear ambiguity, often presented as a strategic necessity and comfort, is no such thing but rather its opposite.

If, as I have suggested, China is not a nuclear threat to this country, India could call off the nuclear arms race with Pakistan by unilaterally giving up the option.

A variety of arguments might be advanced in support of a unilateralist position; but the most telling counter-argument is that, confronted by an India which has unconditionally and verifiably renounced nuclear weapons, Pakistan will find it virtually impossible to keep its nuclear option open or to go nuclear outright. International and domestic opinion and pressures will be exerted against Islamabad as never before. Pakistan's

public and frequently repeated promises to match virtually any Indian move with respect to nuclear arms control and disarmament will be difficult for any government in Islamabad to evade. Though Pakistan may attempt to circumvent its earlier commitments by claiming that only nuclear weapons can counter India's more or less permanent superiority in conventional forces and strategic depth, this can be expected to encounter considerable opposition.

It will be argued against Islamabad that Pakistani deficiencies and fears are correctable in at least two ways. First, Pakistan can be promised enough additional conventional arms to enable it to deter India and to defend itself should deterrence break down. Second, instead of 'levelling up' the quantum of conventional forces, it is possible to 'level down' so that both sides have enough defence against each other, as well as third parties and internal enemies. With its dramatic nuclear gesture, India will have opened the door to negotiating a conventional force balance which is consonant with Pakistani security needs. A South Asian balance will not be easy to construct, given that both sides have to maintain forces for other opponents and for internal security; but negotiated sufficiency and a non-provocative defence is not an impossibility either.

Of the two correctives, levelling down is preferable. One of the advantages of going nuclear, it is usually argued, is that it saves expenditure on relatively expensive conventional arms. Therefore, Pakistan can object that it is cheaper to match India's conventional superiority with nuclear capability than with increased conventional capability. Levelling down to a conventional balance which satisfies both sides and which avoids a costly arms race can overcome this objection. Level-down negotiations would focus on reducing inventories of offensive weapon systems on both sides, that is, systems which encourage thoughts of a first strike and which tend to be more expensive. The problem of what constitutes an 'offensive' weapon and what is a 'defensive' weapon is a difficult but not an insuperable one.

The renunciation of the nuclear option by both sides would be more than just nuclear arms control and disarmament. It would constitute an important psychological and political moment. With it would go an offer to resume talks on Kashmir and on a broader process of normalisation going beyond what has been envisaged thus far by the Deve Gowda government. An Indian government which has made a momentous gesture on nuclear weapons and conventional forces would, for the first time, be able to break through to the Pakistani public in a massive and consequential way and would give that increasingly mobilised public the political space in which to insist India's offers should be reciprocated. When the weaker state calls off a cold war, it will be seen as defeat; when the stronger state does so, it must be a gesture of friendship. There would be tough negotiating days ahead of both sides after the mutual renunciation of nuclear weapons, but South Asia will finally have embarked on its peace.

The Indian government and sections of its policy community, that is, sections of its politicians, officials, media commentators and think-tanks, continue to argue that it is necessary either to build and deploy the bomb or keep the nuclear option open. An enormous intellectual effort has been mounted on behalf of these postures which have acquired plausibility in defence thinking by virtue of repetition, by the paucity of information on defence and nuclear issues (information which is controlled by the state), and by the lack of sustained interest amongst the better part of those responsible for assessing and making public policy. India could be secure without nuclear weapons and could open the door to a thoroughgoing peace in South Asia by giving up the bomb option. Unfortunately, this view has been marginalised in public discourse by appeals to national security and 'realism'. It is time to see that national security and realism are commensurate with quite another policy.

Books

TESTING TIMES: The Global Stake in a Nuclear Test Ban by Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik. Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, 1996.

COMING at a time when the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations in Geneva have entered a critical phase, this slim monograph is not only a well-researched document that diplomats, journalists and anti-war activists the world over will profit from reading but a useful intervention in the domestic debate on nuclear and strategic issues as well. The book's lucid discussion of the treaty's draft provisions – such as on scope and verification – and its summary of the history of test ban talks is especially useful. The authors have taken great care to make the complex technical issues surrounding weapons testing intelligible to the lay person, even though it must be said that some of their conclusions about the CTBT's ability to cap further weapons development are a little optimistic.

Along with a handful of other writers, Praful Bidwai and Achin Vanaik have waged a valiant if lonely battle in the columns of Indian newspapers against New Delhi's decision to oppose the CTBT in its present form. Not surprisingly, *Testing Times* gives a lot of space to critiquing the Indian stand. Indeed, its penultimate chapter is wholly devoted to an analysis of why the anti-CTBT arguments in India are 'specious'.

While the book's preoccupation with India may be understandable given the background of its authors, one wonders whether Bidwai and Vanaik have not been too uncritical in accepting the Western thesis that India is a 'spoiler' whose truculence is the main reason why the treaty may be endangered. This overemphasis on India is a symptom of the book's central weakness, namely its failure to address the complexities of the present world situation and the motivations of big powers like the U.S. in wanting to conclude a flawed CTBT as soon as possible. Instead of recognising the incipient multipolarity which exists today and rooting their analysis of CTBT within its attendant instabilities, Bidwai and Vanaik view the post-Cold War world as being relatively free of inter-imperialist rivalries. This is what leads them to conclude that a test ban treaty – even without an explicit link to disarmament or a ban on the qualitative enhancement of weapons – would be beneficial to the whole world.

The authors' enthusiasm for the CTBT centres on two propositions – one technological and one strategic – and I would like to address each in turn.

Bidwai and Vanaik argue that the CTBT would 'eliminate the technological push which has fuelled the nuclear arms race' and by ending 'the malign influence of the weapons labs as an autonomous lobby' would bring an end to the development of even more lethal and accurate

weapons systems. Related to this is their claim that a 'bona fide CTBT' would break the 'talk-test-build' spiral in which arms control agreements for one category of weapon are followed by the development and testing of newer, more lethal weapons.

The authors explicitly state that a zero-yield test ban (ruling out hydronuclear tests) would put a stop to the development of new nuclear weapons because laboratory-based simulations and hydrodynamic testing cannot substitute for an actual explosion. However, they ignore the fact that both the U.S. and France have already put in place an entire weapons-development architecture aimed at designing and even testing a new generation of nuclear weapons. The U.S. has committed over $2 billion to developing the National Ignition Facility at the Lawrence Livermore nuclear laboratories and similar facilities at Los Alamos and Sandia. Even though the U.S. Congress passed a law in 1993 outlawing research on low-yield nuclear weapons, research is continuing at breakneck speed.[1] In January 1994, the U.S. Navy revealed that it was working on a new low-yield, precision nuclear-capable re-entry vehicle called the 'minibus'. The U.S. Air Force continues to work on the 'Precision Low Yield Weapon Design' or PLYWD project launched after the Gulf War. Most incredibly, the Department of Energy submitted a budget request to the U.S. Congress for 1995 in which it listed ongoing work to develop a High Power Radio Frequency (HPRF) nuclear warhead, a weapon of the 'low yield, high precision' variety supposedly banned by U.S. law.

As for the French, the then Prime Minister, Edmund Balladur, had announced shortly after the NPT was indefinitely extended in 1995 that his government's Palen programme – including the high energy 'Megajoule' laser – was aimed at 'allowing France to move forward with the design of nuclear weapons'. As R. Ramachandran has shown elsewhere,[2] France is funnelling billions of francs towards building a facility in Gironde and plans to conduct its first simulated test explosion by 2003. The claim of Bidwai and Vanaik that the CTBT will end the arms race is undermined by another fact: the continuing research and development in the U.S. on enhancing the Theatre High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) and Global Protection Against Limited Strikes (GPALS) systems – including the 'Brilliant Pebbles' space-based 'hit-to-kill interceptors' against incoming missiles. The U.S. cannot be committed to the progressive reduction of nuclear weapons and an end to the arms race while at the same time seeking to escalate its military capabilities.

Testing Times argues that the CTBT will have 'a major effect on what has been called "the fear factor".' The suggestion is that knowing no new or exotic weapon will emerge can help bring about an eventual reduction in military force levels the world over. Not only would it give an impetus for 'further arms limitations' but would also 'open the door to...a no first-use treaty, reducing stockpiles down to zero, and a treaty to end the deployment of new weapons systems'.

By overplaying the differences between the Pentagon and the weapons laboratories, on the one hand, and the White House and Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) on the other, Bidwai and Vanaik have tended to paint a benign picture of the Clinton administration's motives. This has been made possible by completely ignoring the role nuclear weapons continue to play in the military doctrines of the U.S. (and for that matter, of France and Russia as well). The U.S. post-Cold War nuclear doctrine has been elaborated in a number of places: the 1994 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), the 1993 Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations and the U.S. Navy's recently declassified STRATPLAN 2010. Far from foreseeing a reduction in the military's dependence on nuclear weapons, all of these documents make it clear that the scope for weapons deployment – and even use – has been widened considerably.

The Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations[3] states the new policy very bluntly: 'The fundamental purpose of U.S. nuclear forces is to deter the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), particularly nuclear weapons, and to serve as a hedge against the emergence of an overwhelming conventional threat...(especially in) regional contingencies'. The U.S. is therefore effectively giving itself a pretext to use nuclear weapons against any country by claiming that it is on the verge of developing chemical, bacteriological or nuclear weapons. Recently, in fact, Defence Secretary William Perry warned that the U.S. was prepared to drop 'precision' and 'low yield' nuclear weapons on Libya's Tarhunah chemical plant. According to Jane's Defence Weekly, the U.S. Strategic Command (STRATCOM) is developing highly-classified target lists – known as 'silver books' – for every region of the world.

With this broadening of targets and scenarios, the U.S.'s weapons emphasis is turning away from the old-style high-yield silo-based missiles to a new generation of nuclear weapons that could be used with greater flexibility. Smaller warheads are being designed because weapons planners argue the yield in most strategic weapons makes them too powerful to be used in 'regional scenarios'. Thus the U.S. Navy's STRATPLAN 2010 calls for a 'smaller, more flexible nuclear deterrent force' in which 'low yield' nuclear weapons can provide 'a wider range of targeting options for maintaining a credible nuclear deterrent in the new world order'. It says the 'most appealing' aspect of nuclear warheads with very low yields (the so-called 'mini', 'micro' and 'clean' nukes) is that they 'minimise fallout, residual radiation and collateral damage' – in other words, that they can *actually* be used.

1 Siddharth Varadarajan, 'NPT Extension: Safer World only for U.S ', *Indian Express*, 4 May 1995

2. R Ramachandran, 'CTBT· Advantage, Weapons Powers', *Economic Times*, 6 June 1996.

3 U S Department of Defence, *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, Washington, DC, April 1993

That the U.S. is talking with a forked tongue is made clear by the fact that it is agitating for the CTBT even as its nuclear doctrine and post-test ban weapons technology envisage the use of nuclear weapons against countries which do not wish to toe the U.S. line. French and British doctrine is also moving in the same direction, while Russia recently dropped its long-standing position on no first-use. How do Bidwai and Vanaik square this reality with their enthusiasm for the CTBT? Simply by ignoring the whole dimension of the doctrine altogether!

Seen against this backdrop, it becomes clear that the CTBT is not primarily an arms-control measure at all but a means for the U.S. to lock in place its technological superiority in nuclear weapons over all other nuclear-capable states, especially China. This is the reason for the recent rush of nuclear tests by France and China. The U.S. would like to contain and eventually eliminate China's nuclear weapons capability. It would also like to see an end to France's independent nuclear deterrent – something President Jacques Chirac has explicitly ruled out even though he has reintegrated other aspects of the French military with NATO. France, which has the capability to continue its weapons research without actual tests, is now willing to abide by a zero-yield CTBT but the Chinese have grave reservations. As Bidwai and Vanaik have themselves argued, China is also uncomfortable about the U.S. enthusiasm for intrusive on-site inspections to verify compliance with the treaty. With its vastly superior array of military satellites, the U.S. is in a position to ensure asymmetric enforcement – which is why Beijing is keen to exclude the so-called National Technical Means (NTMs) from the treaty's verification procedure.

Bidwai and Vanaik advocate that India must sign the CTBT as the treaty, flawed though it may be, provides a window of opportunity for ending the arms race. The CTBT, however, does nothing of the sort. The NPT introduced a difference between nuclear-weapons states and the rest of the world and the CTBT will increase the asymmetry between the nuclear-weapons states themselves. Bidwai and Vanaik are right to point out the inconsistencies in the Indian government's approach to the CTBT. They are also right when they zero in on China as the number one concern of India's strategic community. However, the two should also realise that just because India has lived with more than 30 years of nuclear asymmetry vis-a-vis China, our 'bomb lobby' is not going to be convinced that the CTBT should be signed. Indeed, India's refusal to agree to the CTBT reveals, first and foremost, that our ruling circles wish to enter the big league as a contender for global hegemony – something that cannot be done if the nuclear option is relinquished. Secondly, it reveals that this ambition is in direct contradiction with the aim of the U.S. Not only does Washington not want India to emerge as a nuclear-armed potential rival but it is also afraid of the consequences Indian weaponisation will have on the global balance of power. The entire NPT regime might then unravel – with even countries like Japan and Germany going nuclear. But – I hesitate to add – this would not be as tragic an outcome as a world in which a nuclear-armed U.S. dominates everyone else.

While I am constrained to disagree with Bidwai and Vanaik's assessment of the CTBT, it is important to stress that their stand is part of a larger, immensely valuable vision on the need for friendly relations between India and Pakistan and an end to the arms race in the subcontinent. Thus, even as the Indian government declares its refusal to sign the CTBT, we must press it to go further and sign a no-war pact with both Pakistan and China and also make a declaration of no first-use.

Siddharth Varadarajan

INDO-PAK NUCLEAR STANDOFF: The Role of The United States by P.R. Chari. Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1996.

NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION IN INDIA AND PAKISTAN: South Asian Perspectives edited by P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Iftekharuzzaman. Manohar Publishers (New Delhi) for the Regional Center for Strategic Studies, Colombo, 1996.

THE shield enclosing nuclear establishments in India may not occasionally have been impervious to radioactive leaks but has effectively hidden the estate from the public gaze. Any debate on the subject has been limited to pundits, some of whom have at some point been part of the closed decision-making machinery. Often in India, the public appears to have been guided by unreasoned naiveté, leading pollsters to believe there is an overwhelming desire for nuclear weapons. (Pollsters, banking on clever questions, have also said that most Indians want to live under dictatorship).

The nuclear race in the subcontinent is viewed by most as a zero-sum game. For India, its 'Options Open' doctrine may really be a double-zero game – a heads I lose, tails you win scenario. Join the nuclear weapons club and face international wrath, stay cloaked in ambiguity and be punished for nuclear infidelity.

The debate in recent months has become shriller as deliberations at the disarmament conference in Geneva climaxed in what appeared to be a skewed arrangement that did not favour India. Advocates divided over the split atom mixed in various proportions the moral, the strategic and the economic arguments, to form heady cocktails that often left out inconvenient bits of crucial data.

The two volumes under review add to the fast-growing body of literature on the nuclear issue by Indian and other subcontinental pundits. Both are essentially reviews of the various arguments that most interested readers are by now familiar with. There are a few policy prescriptions thrown in the books intended for the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty review conference that took

place in the United Nations last year. Prescriptions range from the easy way out – have a quick test and face consequences to signing a treaty of friendship and cooperation with the United States of America with a guarantee of nuclear security.

But much of the material in the books is still not outdated because one discerns the same kind of debate around the 61-nation Conference on Disarmament aimed at creating the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. An exposition of the strategic rationale for India staying out of the NPT regime effectively provides a backdrop to its posture at the Geneva talks.

Similar in their treatment and, even in part, authorship, the two slim volumes attempt to put the disarmament debates in India and Pakistan in a more informed technological and political perspective and could help lighten the fog that surrounds the nuclear positions each takes, although there are no startling facts or anything investigative. This is by no means easy, given the designed ambiguity in the Indian stance.

The two works demonstrate and simultaneously reflect upon how both India and Pakistan are gripped by the paranoia of nuclear asymmetry. The book by Chari, a bureaucrat who retired to the cooler climes of academia in the shaded Chanakyapuri neighborhood of New Delhi, raises often glossed over questions on the efficacy of a non-tested nuclear weapon and the deterrence between India and Pakistan based on weapons which are untested. For example, he points out that in the absence of any credible command and control arrangements, the two could adopt a 'launch on warning strategy'. The strategy 'is inherently dangerous and unstable,' Chari argues. The establishment of rudimentary nuclear forces would increase the statistical probability of conflict, not by design but by inadvertence. He rationally points out that equipping a missile with a nuclear warhead would not be feasible without conducting a major field testing programme. In sharp contrast to official pronouncements that tend to equate the mere keeping an option to build weapons as deterrence in itself.

Capacity may or may not be synonymous with competence or proficiency. Moreover, there may be little to show that a state of non-weaponized deterrence obtains in South Asia. On the premise that nuclear capabilities on both sides are overrated, Chari says that American efforts in the region are clearly excessive responses. He effectively lists the technical routes available to India and Pakistan, and points out the pitfalls in each and the ones that are not even in the realm of possibility. In view of this, the no-option is probably not a deterrent at all, he argues, picking a major hole in the pro-bomb strategy doctrine. He also doubts U.S. and Western perceptions that a future conflict is likely to escalate into a war involving atom bombs. Even in the post-Cold War phase, external intervention, as in the past, is most likely to defuse the crisis.

Both books contain major explanations of how the triangular nuclear race operates in the South Asian subcontinent. That India's concerns are dictated by China's following a humiliating defeat in 1962, and, Pakistan's policy predicated by what India is doing, aggravated by the 1974 Pokhran blast.

Chari, without making a hysterical case for either turning aggressively nuclear or linking with peaceniks, analyses effectively a security position that is linked to domestic compulsions in both India and Pakistan – each carrying the bloodstained baggage of partition..

The second book, edited by Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, a Pakistani security expert, and Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of the Regional Center for Strategic Studies, Colombo, contains rarely cited concerns on the nuclear issue by the smaller nations of the region. The 5-nation, 9-author volume, never made it to the NPT review conference, but could serve to introduce a Bangladeshi or a Sri Lankan and even a Nepali perspective in the security debate involving nuclear weapons.

It is perhaps important for India to know, specially when the new centre-left government wants to give improving neighbourly relations priority in foreign policy, how some of these countries feel about the big brother with nuclear teeth.

Introduction of nuclear warheads could further aggravate existing historical problems and those of identity, integration, legitimacy and institution-building in the struggling nation states of the region.

Ranjan Roy

CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY: Theory and Practice
edited by Thomas W. Robinson and David Shambaugh
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

THERE is understandable anxiety among the vast horde of professional China-watchers worldwide that they may end up as those studying the erstwhile Soviet Union did when, notwithstanding some sixty years of intense study of the Communist system, they found themselves clueless about the whys and hows of the spectacularly speedy unravelling of the USSR. Sinologists fear a similarly ironic end awaits their efforts now that the 91-year old Deng Xiaoping is contemplating his place in the Communist Valhalla and his country stands poised on an abyss.

This niggling issue of the sinologist's profession pride is tackled head-on by the doyen of American sinologists, Allen S. Whiting. He believes that the International Relations (IR) theory is a far stronger guide to Chinese foreign behaviour than gut instinct, which is apparently what diplomats use. Hence the emphasis of the authors in this book is to stress the theoretical underpinning of their analyses and appraisals. But the value of this approach is immediately undermined by a Chinese scholar Wang Jisi, who perhaps cleaving to the Party-line, dismisses the fine distinctions and concepts contained in the IR theory – like

the balance-of-power system, national interest and power politics – as being of little account, insisting that all Chinese actions and policies are motivated by high principles and not, presumably, by the desire to help the political scientists in their endless theorizing.

Whether theory, practice or intuition is the best bet can be argued endlessly. But whatever the theoretical considerations involved, there is a desperate need for countries like India, abutting on that most obscure and violent of societies, to first understand and then correctly anticipate events and developments in China. Especially, as there is every likelihood that with the Beijing's weakening central authority, the effects of nationalist uprising in Tibet and an Islamic separatist movement in Xinjiang (where the Muslim population is officially stated to be 18 million, but unofficially is estimated to be as high as 25-30 million) will wash over our borderlands, thus setting up a confrontation with the People's Liberation Army. China's past record would appear to be the most reliable thing to base conclusions on. However, as one of the editors of this book Tom Robinson, puts it, the situation is so unsettled that China has 'become both an anomaly and an anachronism' – a global leader and an outsider and all in all, extremely hard to read. Nevertheless, this volume with authoritative contributions by reputed analysts on various aspects of China, is as good a single source as any to get that record straight.

Admittedly, the record is not pretty. For instance, China has always plugged itself as *the* third world leader. Unfortunately, the Chinese have traditionally been so antipathetic, particularly to blacks, that Beijing's policy has run aground, most conspicuously in Africa. The late 19th century Chinese 'reformer' Kang Youwei, for instance, foresaw a world government, but recommended as its first priority the moving of all the blacks from the African continent to the Arctic! As Philip Snow points out in this collection, this attitude is reflected in the recent refusal by Chinese engineers working on the showpiece TanZam railway. When stung by bees, they refused to be treated by local doctors, preferring European ones instead!

The Maoist world-view, still not discarded by Dengist China, is extremely idiosyncratic. During the Cold War, all countries in Europe, Western and East-bloc (minus Romania, Yugoslavia and Albania) were considered part of the 'Second World'. As Michael Yehuda suggests, this was at once ideologically inconsistent and weak. Curiously, this view has the merit of turning out right in the Europe of today when the members of the late, little lamented Warsaw Pact, are on the verge of gaining entry into NATO! But Beijing, as Steven I. Levine reveals, has never prized ideological rectitude as much as outsiders believed it did and consequently proposes that Chinese foreign policy be assessed in terms of the formal and informal ideology-dichotomy rather than on Marxist-Leninist precepts.

Yet there are certain constants in the Chinese policy firmament. Principally, the hoary notion of China's centrality. In one of the best essays in this collection, William C. Kirkby of Harvard postulates that it was parity that the Chinese Court sought in the pre-Opium War period (in the modern era), but that the 'central kingdom' got exhumed powerfully with the 'myth' propagated by the Western countries of the monolithic 'China-market', a Western fixation still current and something that still seems to drive China's supremacist self-views.

The other constant of Chinese political life, Steven M. Goldstein identifies, is the clash between the votaries of *zili gengsheng* (self reliance) and *wailai gengsheng* (transformation using outside assistance). Mao began as a believer in the wailai only to swing radically to the zili extreme. Deng deliberately moved the country back to reforms and links with the outside world, a resolve strengthened ironically, says Goldstein, by the demise of the Soviet system.

Carol Lee Hamrin locates the source of China's peril in the fact that the entire system is pivoted on the paramountcy of the charismatic leader (first Mao, then Deng). Ominously for the future, she notes that while Mao's designated successor Hua Guofeng survived some four years after his master's death, Deng's joint appointees to his mantle, Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, were deposed during the present maximum leader's lifetime by the faction that put Jiang Zemin in their place. The leadership sweepstakes attending on Deng's death could well turn out to be an enormously bloody and, system-wise, a destabilising affair.

But it may not involve a slide back to the zili gengsheng ideology in part because China (*i*) cannot do without foreign science and technology – the lynchpin of Beijing's efforts to build itself up as a military super-power. This is evident in Wendy Freiman's conclusion, for example, that China's science and technology policy is essentially defence-driven. And (*ii*) because China since the mid-1970s has increasingly meshed its economy into the international market as a producer of low-technology textiles and engineering goods, notwithstanding its earlier ranting against the 'international division of labour' as an imperialist design. Madelyn C. Ross concludes that having plugged so intimately into the world economy and having benefited so handsomely from this connection, Beijing may find itself domestically unable to distance itself ever again.

And what of China's future relations with its old adversaries? David Shambaugh thinks, apropos the Sino-U.S. ties, that, 'As China develops economically and militarily...old rivalries will reassert themselves, and the U.S. and China will continue to experience a complex, ambivalent and probably contentious relationship.' This would be appear to be the future shape of Sino-Indian relations as well. The question is whether New Delhi will have the nerve to stand up to Beijing for that will require India to acquire a lot of powder and to keep it dry.

Bharat Karnad

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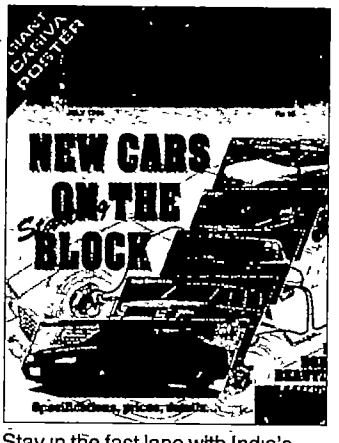

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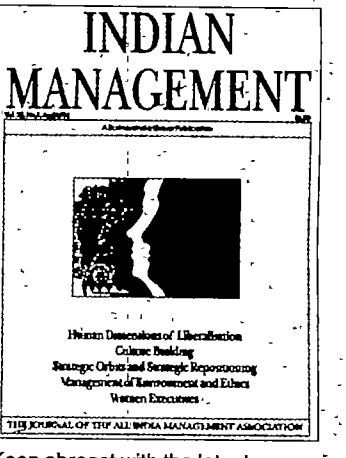

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Comment:

Who broke the idols?

FORTY SIX cases of idol breaking occurred in Beawar, a subdivision of Ajmer in central Rajasthan in the mid-1980s and were widely reported in the local and national press. According to both local and state level police, these were primarily cases of Muslims breaking Hindu icons. In popular understanding, they were represented as having been caused by Muslim *kattarpanthis* or fanatics.

The region of Magra-Merwara in the central Aravallis consists of two groups, the Rawat and the Merat, classified as Hindu and Muslim respectively. As I started fieldwork, I presumed that certain local Merat Muslims were responsible for breaking the idols in the area. After all, who else would break 'Hindu' icons? The phenomenon could possibly be explained by their new Islamic identity that had become particularly prominent in recent decades as a consequence of the work of several Muslim educational and reformist organizations So I investigated three villages where such episodes had taken place: Nimgarh, Chang, and Baria Bhau. The findings were not only surprising but have shaken my presumptions regarding both the reproduction of Hinduism and the nature of Indian Islamic practice.

Sixteen episodes of idol-breaking were said to have taken place at Nimgarh, a dominantly Merat village. Interestingly, however, most of the so-called Hindu icons that had been 'broken' were actually the deified ancestors of the Merat, locally called *jhunjhar*. Had the Merat in the interim become more 'fundamentalist' having taken to regular *namaz* and given up their former practices of deifying their dead ancestors, I asked myself? Yet just a year before the alleged episode, a jhunjhar in the house of the ex-Sarpanch of Merat, Bhima Singh, had been established by his brother's widow.

All the thirteen jhunjhars that were broken in a single night were then the Merat's own ancestors whose spirits they were trying to propitiate by constructing a shrine. The process involves setting up a *chabutara* (stone platform) on which a stone icon of the male or female ancestor is placed. The icon consists of a painted slab depicting a male or female figure depending on the identity of the deceased. These can be bought from special shops in the market. In Beawar town, among others, two shops owned by Muslims sell the jhunjhar and a large number of the artisans are Muslim as well. I purchased one from Ayub who instructed me, 'Make sure you buy the red cloth, the *laccha* and *agarbatti* to go with it. The jhunjhar must not touch the ground,' he warned, adding that the buyer must also purchase red cloth, *dhup* and *agarbatti*, *loban* and *kapur*, *batashas* and *roli* and *panni* – items necessary for the rite. Villagers return with the slabs to organize the *rati jagga* at which Merat and other village women collect to sing what they call *devta* songs through the night to the beat of the *dholi* while they apply henna on their hands.

The cult of the deification of the dead is associated with premature and accidental death. It is believed that after unnatural death the *pret*, or spirit, continues to haunt the family and might even possess a loved one. It can only be propitiated by constructing a jhunjhar. The ritual installation is complete with the offering of a lamp, incense, and flowers and the ancestor is made to wear a locket. The shrine is usually found on the corner of a field facing the east – the direction of sunrise.

In the controversy over icon-breaking, what failed to enter popular imagination was the angry reaction of the Merat who complained to the administration and registered a police case at Beawar Sadar (71/85 under 295 IPC, of Rupa, s/o Ahmada, *jati* Merat, 3.7.1985).

Another complaint of 'icon' breaking referred to the damage caused to the Tejaji icon at Nimgarh. Press reports mentioned that the *pujari* (priest) is a Bhopa but significantly failed to state that he is a Merat, just as they had obliterated the mention that the broken jhunjhar were mostly Merat ancestors. Kamruddin is a popular *sevak* or ritual specialist of the Tejaji temple. This cult has particular efficacy with regard to poison, and people come from far away to cure themselves of snakebite. It is very popular among peasant castes such as the Jats, Gujars, Merat and Rawat. Like the cult of Baba or Pir Ramdeo, it spans religious boundaries.

Nimgarh also has a *devi* shrine looked after by Nasruddin, a young Merat boy. Earlier his sister used to get the *bhav* (vision), but after her death the goddess appears through him. As I was leaving the village a Merat leader told me that he was trying to get a road built that would connect the village and Shamgarh, the site of the main devi shrine as well as significant in local history for the detention of 'freedom fighters'. The *than*, it might be mentioned, is the shrine of the lower castes. Rajasthan has historically been an area of relatively low Brahmanical influence, hence a far less Sanskritised culture is found here and the boundaries of popular Hinduism and Islam are often blurred and indistinguishable.

I thought it imperative to ask who the caretakers, the benefactors and the patrons of local shrines were. The area is particularly well-known for three Siva *dhunis* of considerable antiquity. The Jhak Siva dhuni has a Merat *tantrik* along with a dalit Khatik who had taken upon themselves the conduct of shrine ritual. Merats have to pay three rupees per household towards the expenses of the shrine. Lal Mohammad told me, 'We look after the Sivpura ghata dhuni. We patronize all the three dhunis. It is optional for the (Hindu) Rawat, but necessary for the Merat. If there is a wedding, we know that five hundred rupees have to be paid first to the dhuni.' When I visited the site on Sivaratri, Merat men from the surrounding areas were congregating towards the Shivpura ghata dhuni for the night-long jagran. I was even more astounded when a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) activist told me, 'Merati *vaise hi murtiyan bithate, bhairuji aur mataji ko mante hain.*' (The Merat instal icons and believe in the same gods and follow all festivals, Holi and Diwali.)

Chang is another Merat dominated village which has also been the site of major ethnic disputation. The *maulvi* in charge of the local *madrasah*, it was alleged, had thrown a cow's bone in the well and thus made it unpotable for Hindus. But the dispute, we learnt, had actually arisen when the maulvi used a motor to draw water from the well for the construction of the mosque. The conflict that was essentially over scarce water, as the ground water level had sunk particularly low in an arid zone, not over religious insults.

Pohap Singh, a VHP-Bajrang Dal activist and local leader, told us that the Merat were solely responsible for damaging the village Tejaji icon. Other villagers, however, disclosed that a Hindu *nai* (barber) who had too much to drink had thrown a stone at the Tejaji shrine. Interestingly, in Chang, it is Subbhan, the Merat Bhopa and sevak of the Ramdev shrine, who presides over the installation of the jhunjhar in the fields. A fakir once used to be the sevak of Chang's Tejaji shrine. The new Bhopa called Kopa Merat now looks after it. Kalu Khan, the Merat Sarpanch, I also learnt, had got Bhairu and Ganga Mata icons established at his well. A new village temple has been built and claimed by the Bajrang Dal, whose flag flies atop. Nonetheless, on Shivratri, Merat children informed us that large numbers from their families had spent the night at the temple where the *bhajan mandli* had been singing songs. Shayar said that he had gone with his Hindu friends. A number of Merat still continue to be married by *pheras* and others by the *nikah*, that is by Hindu or by Muslim ritual. So much for the Islamization of Chang's residents that I had been forewarned about!

At Baria Bhau, Merats told me of how upset they were at the breaking of the icons made for their ancestors. Yet they were the ones to be held in police custody at Jhak. A Merat from the village told me what an antagonist had told him, 'We were upset as these were the icons made for our *bap dada*,' he said. He responded, 'If you don't want to worship them, don't do so, but don't break them.' He went on to describe the irony of the situation: while his uncle and half his family were held in police custody, he met the other half in the city who wanted him to go with them to Chang and further on to *nandna* with the devotional offering to the mataji-Bhairuji shrine. 'I said to myself,' he mused, 'what a strange community! Half are held up for breaking an icon, the other half are going to worship one!'

I am left with even more questions now than when I began my study. Why was it that the peak of the icon breaking activity coincided with wave of VHP conversion? Why was it simultaneous with the outbreak of rumours of beef cutting as well? Why had the icon-breaking occurred in the villages where the VHP had been particularly active – such as Masuda, Suava, Kharia Khera, Nimgarh, Baria Bhau, Shyam Garh, and Surajpura? And why was it that peace now prevailed? Had the Merat suddenly become less fundamentalist? Where is the ideological boundary between the 'Hindu' and the 'Muslim', I ask myself. Why is the story of the cultural encounter between Hinduism and Islam now being exclusively written as a narrative of conflict and violence?

I am also at a loss to explain the VHP campaign that claims to have converted over thirty thousand Merat Muslims to Hinduism. Were they not converting people who had played a far greater role in the transmission and reproduction of Hinduism than any of their *pracharaks*? Clearly there is a redefinition of the civilizational project of Hinduism underway that is grounded in the premise that Muslims can only play a role in eroding or destroying it and have made no contribution to sustaining and reproducing it.

SHAIL MAYARAM

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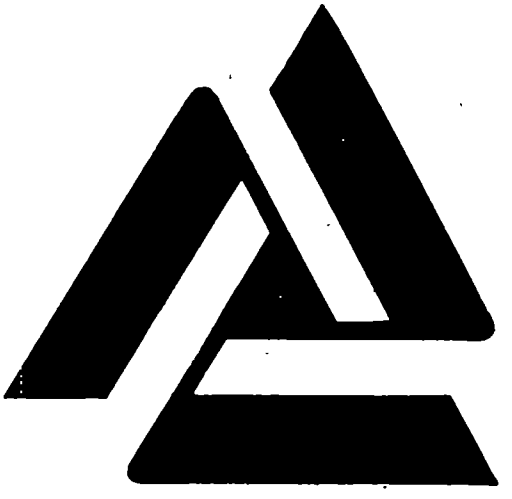

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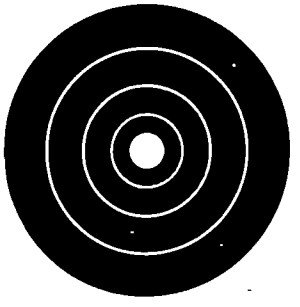

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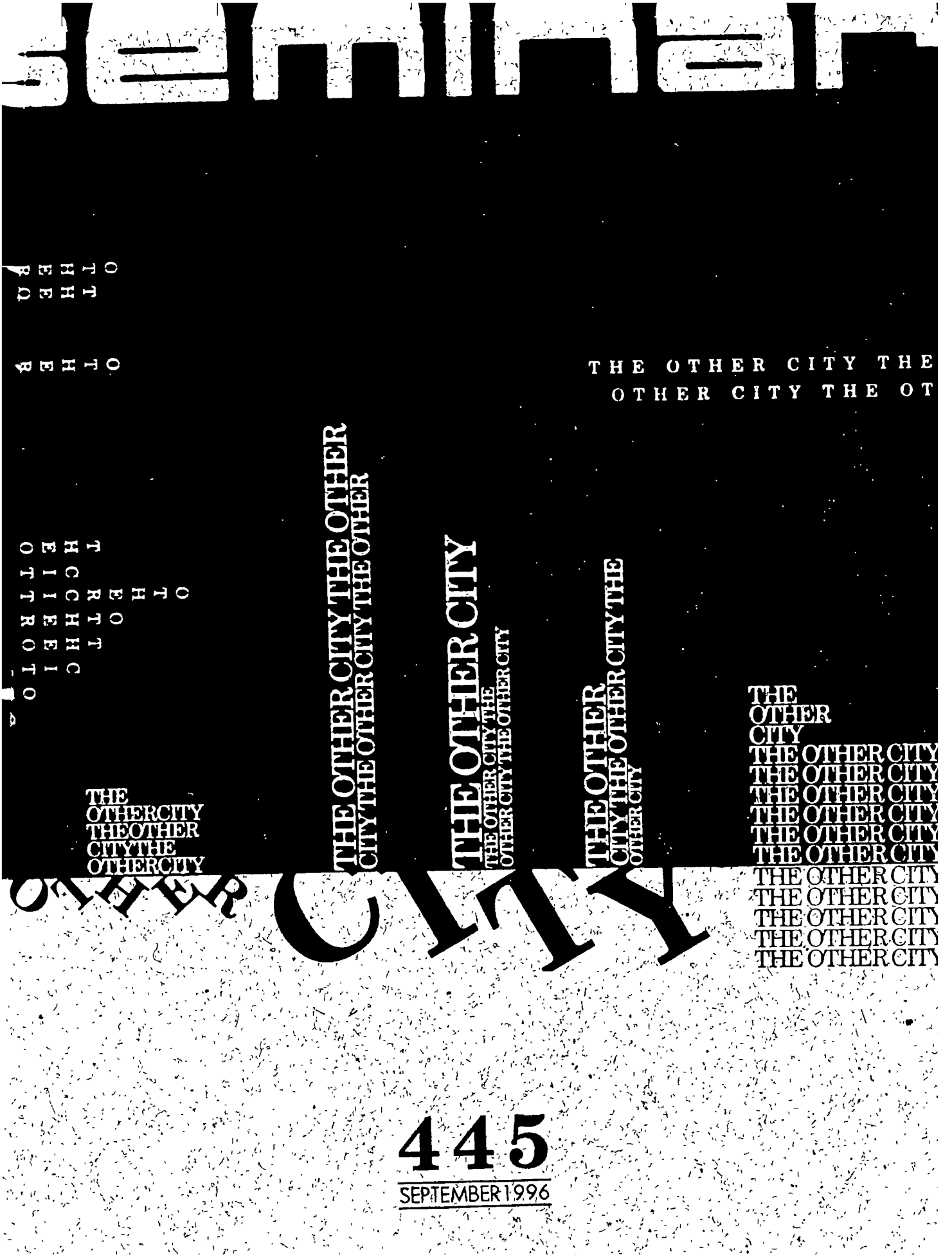
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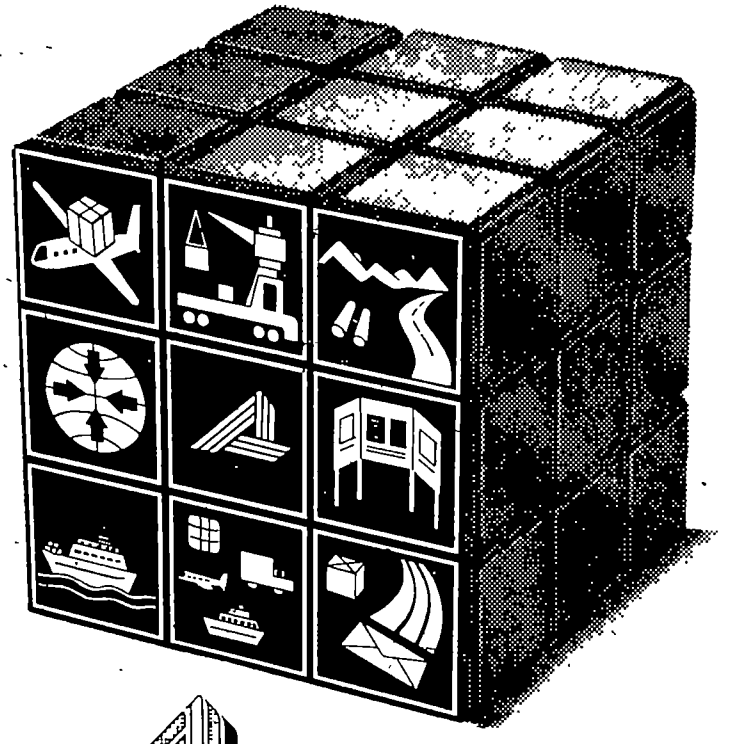

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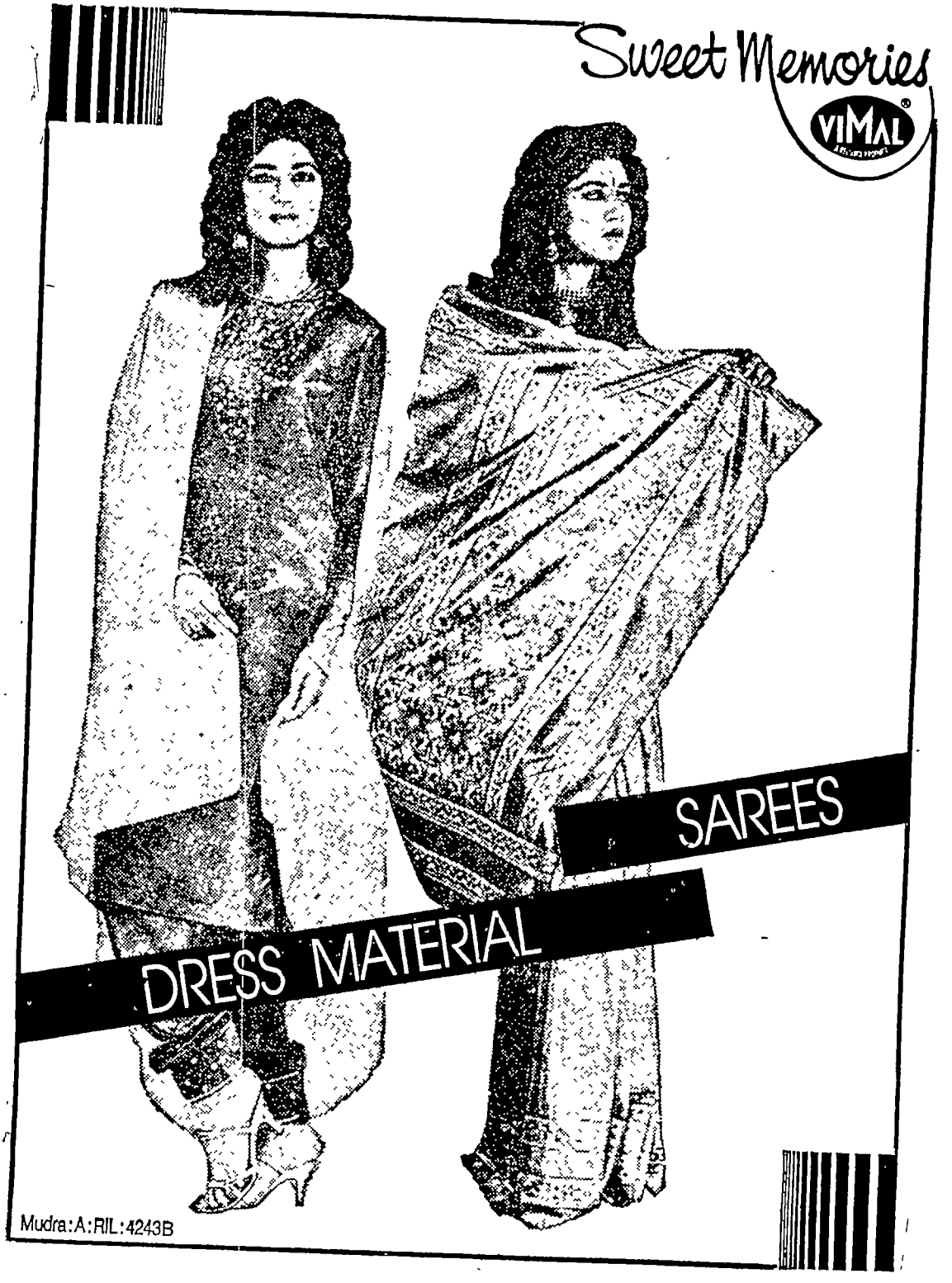
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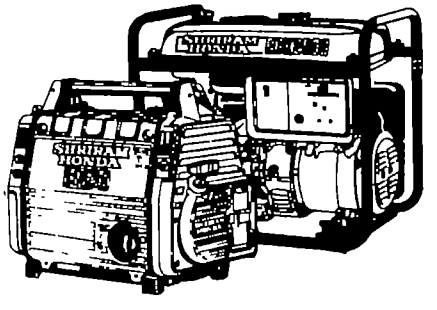

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The problem

ANY remembered experience of a place invariably seeks to capture something of the picture book, the ideal view of the city. From a boat on the water even Varanasi can return to an idyllic mode of life. The view of the *ghats* makes the necessary illusion of theatre: corpses burning on the platform, smoke rising through *peepal* leaves, a group of men dipping into the water, a woman rubbing soap on a piece of cloth. Behind them, the masonry rising in a skyline of religious pinnacles, and stone arches. Through a vaporous haze above the water line, the steps of the ghats ascend to reflective stillness.

The city – any city – always seems to show its best face from a distance. Like most things, it reveals its advantage only when reality dissolves into a blur. When the jumble of actual life is lost to the atmosphere.

But the signs of the city in which I now live are no longer related to the vastness of imagination. They belong instead to dimension. The city of tenements overwhelms, swallowing the past in an uncontrollable spasm, stretching its bounds into unreclaimed countryside. Wheat fields sprout low cost apartments; garbage appears on yet unfinished roads; electricity and phone lines are tapped in unofficial connections. Hotel facades rise up in finely proportioned compositions of tiles and terracotta; in parks behind them – overlooking filigreed balconies – village life continues: the early morning defecators line up behind the bushes, smoke from suburban factories settles on the gladioli blossoms carefully tended on the city's roundabouts. Raw sewage snakes its way into parkland.

Beyond city garbage heaps, where plastic packets of Maggi noodles mix with rotting vegetable peels, egg shells and abandoned animal carcasses, it is easy to sense the uneasy contradictions of the place. In low-lying tenements that bleed the earth, in overstyled houses of the wealthier business families, in rows of shops and truck repair docks, or blackened car windows pasted with the harried signs of identity: Guptas, Malhotras, Car Decor, or even the evening dung fires that spread the darkening pall across the cubical mass of parasitic unplastered walls – the new city is a charged theatrical spectacle – a vast battleground perpetually smoking and smouldering and choking. Amongst the smoke, and houses, made of black plastic stretched unevenly across a roof of twigs and bicycle tyres, it is not easy to sense anything of the high aspirations of some urban idea, the ideal that had once erected Varanasi. From the distant sight lines of a flyover, the place has something of the character of war, a people in temporary flight. The city as a quickly erected stage set of incomplete structures; and the smoke and smouldering remains – as if the day's battle is over, and both sides have retreated into their makeshift encampments.

In a place that reveals humanity in a state of perpetual flux, I am only a participant in the disorder of my surroundings. Instant noodles and Pepsi bottles are displayed in stores that once carried rations. On mental par with the *mali* who wears a T-shirt of Columbia U, or the director of a shoe factory that allows its waste to percolate into the city drinking water supply now riding a 340 SE sedan, secluded behind lace curtains. I know I too am part of the confused whirlpool of sensations. Spitting along the street, at the hoarding, branded deep within the concrete grey of buildings, I am part of the spilling on the road. Intrinsically linked to the half-clad labourers carrying concrete up the bamboo and twine scaffolding, the sun bleached children lying on the piled sand. City sounds deflect off the hoardings, the Vimal man's jaded smile against the onslaught of the city; the fake house fronts, like the glint of lacquered nails on a whore, the false front of people's faces, the lie that is my city.

The physical city has also become tainted by statistical recall. The sixty murders, the thirty rapes shadow the appreciation of the new hybrids at the chrysanthemum show. The increasing numbers on the city's pollution rolls mar the memory of its days as garden suburb. I learn to weigh everything in the scales of differing disciplines. As an architect I assess the worth of buildings; I recount my fears of the growing population as a planner. I fear the gnawing encroachments, the despair on the sidewalk, as a sociologist. When I sensed the measurable decay spreading into the countryside, I become a demographer. The only way to

survive is to impose my own will on the city. So I learn the proverbial signals, the messages of hostility. I collide and rub and haggle and protest as I move about the road. On the crowded bus, I learn to push my way past the young mother, brushing my hands into her privacy; I know when to delay payments to the contractor, who in turn delays his own payments to the labourers. I learn to relish the details of dowry deaths in *The Hindustan Times*, the smaller columns of people crushed under a bus on page three. I draw away at the touch of an armless beggar: all the signs of hostility enter my bloodstream.

If I sense in the sight a dereliction and despair, I know it is in fact part of my own delusion, the failure – admittedly – of professions that had supposedly created the city. My fears are part of the uncompromising adage of teaching that says that habitable place can only be created on the drawing board. The darkening plain of tenements, the smoky line of its barely discernible preoccupations, repulse me only because I am always standing in judgment of their designs. Yet I knew nothing of consequence in the city is actually willed or controlled by decisions that I am capable of making – the clean rectangular decisions of the drafting table. The professional in me is incapable of defining himself at the epicentre of the place's shared reality.

It would take Mahatma Gandhi or Vinoba Bhave too long to decipher the signs of the new age. As the reluctant inheritor of their India, I can sense only the occasional symbolic references of the independence bestowed on me. The bent figure with cane and glasses still stands erect. But now only as a diminutive caricature on a marble pedestal, wagging his finger in a city square overrun by vendors and mongrel dogs. There is little that the Mahatma can do. The winds of change, the influences of other cultures, have blown into the house. Their force has upturned the terracotta vase, broken the ten-headed figure of Kali. And in the process everything stands changed. The city is only a temporary condition to be exploited in the hope of rebirth into a better after life. I am a conqueror, just like Mahmud of Ghazni before me, just like a forest officer from Himachal. My need to plunder is always greater than my fear of being plundered. The factory, the car, the choked drain and credit card are not just imported ideals, but the desirable benchmarks of the new freedom.

In order to survive and live well, it is important not to believe in anything – never letting yourself plunge below the shadows and sounds that occupy the surfaces. While driving past the industrial township I can pull the curtains back and watch the mushroom cloud – the mixture of industrial effluents and *chulha* smoke rising from the mud hovels – and allow my own festering guilt to surface. For a moment the view of tarpaulin clad houses clouds my mind with thoughts of urban renewal – and all the repeated predictions and messages of hope. What destitution, what desperation. Something should be done. In my middle class view, I know the settlement in the sight line is indeed a landscape of persistent problems, from which the residents had no escape. So I learn to talk of its rehabilitation, with even a defensive self-righteousness. Even attend the seminar on 'the politics of urban reform' at the India International Centre.

But in the back of my mind I know the extent of my deceptions. In the drawing room it is easy to fall prey to the seductions of the city. The city as historical territory, the city as intellectual idea is far more palatable than the city as a degraded place, the city as twentieth century failure.

But in the muted light of imitation Scandinavian fixtures, the din and despair of the place are no longer palpable. Among deep polished, teak book-cases lined with picture texts of Chagall and Miro, mixing freely with Indian miniatures and Husains, the hushed tones of co-conspirators – tweed-coated men and chiffon encased women – continue to discuss intimations of profits and loss, the rising crime rate, the return of the Congress party, the need for a rapid transit system. Buttressed by the sight of Rajasthani paintings and mirror-work cushions, all is well. The real city, that tiresome stretch of despair and dereliction, is far away.

GAUTAM BHATIA

Anderun-e-Fasil Shahar

NARAYANI GUPTA

THERE is a beautifully-produced book on Paris, (a series of maps actually), which shows the growth of the city over the centuries, from the tiny settlement of the early middle ages, expanding through concentric city walls to the open city it is today. From the Luxembourg to La Defense is many centuries, yet on the map it is a straight line.

Paris has the advantages and attractions of modernity – security, excellent civic services, efficient mass transport, accessibility to a wide range of intellectual and cultural resources – without having destroyed or marginalised the older areas. An awareness of and respect for history, and an affection for the city, are ingredients as important in urban management as are funds and engineering skills. Cities are human, not machines.

Over 80 per cent of the bigger towns and cities of the Indian subcontinent are historic ones. In many cases the names are older than the extant buildings, which, with the exception of monumental remains and sacred sites, are seldom older than the 17th century. To these were added territories designed by the British from the 18th century. Enclaving all these and linking them are the areas which have been colonised from above and below in the last 50 years, by planners and 'squatters' alike.

Till the 19th century, Indian towns, like those of contemporary Europe, were pedestrian towns, mostly walled. From the spine of formal avenues *galis* branched out to curl themselves around *havelis*. There was the same abundance of retail and wholesale markets as today. Water was stored or channelled, and in most cases towns were near rivers. If a town did not 'work', it was swiftly and painlessly abandoned and a new location found. On occasion, sites were revitalised. Very often, accretions of population were accommodated in *ganjes* and *puras* beyond the city wall. There were instances of ribbon-development along rivers or highways. The intramural population varied from about 100,000 to 400,000. The sense of *community* was perceptible at the *mohulla* level (a walled city would have something like 500 mohullas) and a sense of the city was generated by participation in festivals and processions.

Changed alignments of routes and land grants could enlarge villages into *qasbas*, and qasbas into towns. But villages/qasbas became enclaved in larger urban settlements when the British towns grew in sprawling fashion; thus the villages of Gariahat and Pursawakkam became part of Calcutta and Madras. Later, inland towns also expanded to swallow up neighbouring villages, and fields became housing estates. And from the 1950s, Indian town maps were spread out on the planners' tales, to be overlaid with 'master plans'.

School textbooks remind us proudly that the Harappans built planned towns. But no Harappan will be able to decipher the master plans which have been prepared for over 1000 Indian towns in the last 40 years, because the terms used in these plans are derived from British and American regulations. The first generation of Independent India's planners were trained in the West and had little interest in Harappan or even in Mughal

or Vijayanagar town planning. Indian history was a subject learned at school and then forgotten. Indian towns, with those of countries east of Greece, were herded into Sjoberg's category of timeless 'pre-industrial', while the development of American towns appeared 'scientific'. The American 'industrial' town was equated with a universal 'modern'. The coming of the automobile had girded the 6 mi. x 6 mi. American township with suburbs, and renamed it as 'downtown'. The older housing stock was occupied by the poor (often 'coloured') and when racial tension escalated in the 1950s, one of the points of conflict was the 'upgradation' and 'gentrification' of these 'inner cities'. In Britain also, in the 1950s, droves of Asian and West Indian immigrants settled in the cheap, derelict houses of the 'inner cities'.

The 1950s were a point of convergence; the West still believed in the efficacy of town planning, and the Indians had just begun to believe in it. It was part of the larger agenda of a planned economy. The plans did not speak of *bazaar*, *chowk*, *ganj*, *kucha*, *gali* or *mohulla*. They had central business districts, district centres, community centres, institutional areas, residential zones. The brightly coloured maps (green for open spaces, gold for housing, pink for institutions) looked good on display boards. The planners – many of them hardworking, idealistic individuals – were happy with their efforts. But in integrating older towns into planned cities, new labels were pasted over the older form. Thus, in the Delhi Master Plan, Chandni Chowk rejoiced in three labels – CBD, slum and 'inner city' – the first based on function, the second on population density and the third on the fact of being in the 'walled city' (no matter that most of the wall was gone).

These areas were cut across by lines of services and communications needed by the larger community. These, in turn, were controlled by different agencies of government. The planners understood very little of the rationale for the new rules. What or who is FAR/FSI? (though when buildings on small plots along narrow lanes acquire a fourth storey their neighbours are disconcerted to find the sun has deserted them, and their privacy is gone). What is 'right of way'? (though when roads are widened the pedestrian dodging the speeding Maruti may well ask '*Whose* right of way'?)

Town-dwellers are distanced from sections of their towns by time, by geography or by an unfamiliar culture. The 'traditional'/'modern' binary categories of sociologists has coloured ways of seeing. In the case of towns 'traditional' is understood in terms of morphology and architecture rather than function. It, therefore, comes as a surprise to find the most 'modern' shops selling photo equipment, for example, located in a gali in an old part of a town. It is also assumed that people living in these areas have a 'traditional' lifestyle. In fact, many of them probably enjoy greater mobility and possess more 'modern' gadgets than many living in newer neighbourhoods.

The wall of the 'walled city' is more often in the minds of people than on the ground, of people who think that time stands still in older neighbourhoods. Nothing could be further from the truth. The landscape of these areas changes constantly. Houses change hands, homes become shops, courtyards are roofed to become offices, innumerable rooms and balconies are added. Those who merely *view* them are disconcerted by the changes. They talk of 'revitalising' the areas, when in fact what they want is some degree of *de*vitalisation, to keep the buildings frozen in time, inhabited by so many Miss Havishams. Hence the attraction of a picture-book like *Mansions at Dusk*, a story like *In Custody* or the film of Ruswa's *Umrao Jan Ada*. Hence the anxious concern for 'authentic' Mughlai food. The 'gaze' of today's urban dweller is directed towards *ghazals*, havelis, period cuisine and costumes, all crassly endangered by modern film songs, modern houses, fast food and Western clothes.

For most part, this shallow nostalgia is not enriched by empathy, knowledge or research. The tourist-directed commodification of older urban areas – north Calcutta, Bombay's Banganga, Delhi's Chandni Chowk, Hyderabad's Char Minar – encourage bright little shops and eateries, where names like 'Khazana', 'Libas', 'Tohfa' or 'Dastarkhwan' are *de rigeur*. The non-commercial aspects of these areas are insufficiently understood – the slow pace, the hierarchy of vehicles which had kept galis free of polluting vehicles, the good neighbourliness which did not allow the rooms of a house to be overlooked. The dirt and dust churned up by tramping feet and wheels far in excess of the holding capacity of the gali reinforce the stereotype of the *'dirty'* walled city in the mind of the outsider. In many older urban areas, fifty years of 'rent control' (introduced during the Second World War) has frozen not only rents but also the periodic repair and renewal. The thoroughfares crumble under excessive pressure of vehicles, and civic facilities are minimal.

Together, all these reduce the *plannees'* self-esteem, and generate among the young a craving to move out into the more open outer city. A decade or so ago, the outer city appeared a 'modern' halfway house to the international city. But the 'modern' has been infiltrating the older areas. English medium schools and computer training centres proliferate. As all households watch the same TV programme, and as lifestyles change, the walls of the mind between old and new areas begin to crumble.

While the ground reality changes, the categories of social scientists remain behind times. In search of the (simplistic) generalisation, it is tempting to 'use the words "walled city" and "inner" city interchangeably because ... the historical census and municipal definition of the walled area was known as city *anderum*' (Ratna Naidu). These areas are seen not only as congested or as deprived in terms of municipal services, but at prone to 'communal' tension. Thus, the sense of the 'walled' city becomes that of a ghetto.

Ironically, it was the perceived needs of health and security that led to some essential qualities of older India

towns being destroyed, leading many of them to turn in on themselves. The security of the mohullas was sacrificed for the greater security of the town when kucha gates were destroyed after the Revolt of 1857-8. 'Improvements' such as clock towers and railway lines and stations were built by destroying much of the old fabric.

Municipal government was weak because of limited income, aggravated by the fact that the better-off Indian members were careful to ensure that the burden of taxation did not fall on *them*. 'Indian areas' received a smaller cut of the municipal cake than cantonments/civil lines and that richly endowed imperial inner city, Lutyens' New Delhi. 1947 created a sudden social change in the older towns of the subcontinent. Homes deserted by Hindus in Pakistan and by Muslims in India were occupied by the incoming migrants. In densely built-up areas, where families are not hived off by high walls and indifference, organic links made for harmony. When these links were snapped, tension could occur. *But* new links are forged over the years, and mental wounds heal. An insidious threat to the historic town is its growing attraction for real estate dealers. For the more ruthless among them, it helps if the older areas can be projected as a ghetto, as inhabited by an alien community.

Thus the historic town is different things to different people – a crowded slum, a gracious lifestyle laced with poetry and music, an ecologically sensible settlement, an alien ghetto, bastion and target of political rivalries. 'Soul', 'flavour' and 'ambience' are the favourite words used by outsiders. But the officials and planners do not use these terms, nor do those who live there. Like all of our heritage, our historic towns need to be treated with care and concern – something which can be done only by discussion and public education. Older towns have so much to teach us. Large rooms and vast quantities of glass are not needed to enhance the quality of life (something the Parisians always understood). Shared public areas need to be nurtured and kept clean (contrast the clean galis of old Bhopal or the open areas in a jhuggi-cluster with the unspeakably filthy service lanes in many upper income neighbourhoods). Road and house alignments can help lower temperatures (contrast the burning heat of roads in 'planned' localities). All vehicles do not need access to all areas, and pedestrianisation is more human than high and segmented 'footpaths' that no invalid/old person can negotiate. Women and children are safer in the older parts of the town than in modern 'colonies'. The habit of naive (and ill-educated) political leaders granting boons of extra FAR and building *baraat-ghars* in open chowks has to be stopped.

A person who took Indian towns seriously was Patrick Geddes who, 75 years ago, was to Indian planning what Laurie Baker has been to Indian architecture in our time.

'In city planning we must constantly keep in view the whole city, old and new alike in all its aspects and at all its levels. The transition in an Indian city, from narrow lanes and earthen dwellings to small streets, great streets and buildings of high importance and architectural beauty, form an inseparably interwoven structure. Once this is understood, the city plan ceases to appear as an involved network of thoroughfares dividing masses of building blocks, but appears instead as a great chessboard on which the manifold game of life is in active progress.... The problem of city planning, as of chess, is to improve the situation by turning its very difficulties into opportunities. Results thus obtained are both more economical and more interesting even aesthetically, than those achieved by clearing the board and resetting the pieces.'

We are so lucky to be in a country where our towns have not been destroyed by warfare and bombing, where we do not have to rebuild a Warsaw or Dubrovnik. But peace can destroy slowly what war destroys in a lightning flash. To check such destruction should be a sacred responsibility enjoined on all of us.

Empathising with a colonial past

PARTHO DATTA

PERHAPS the great monuments to colonial modernity are still cities – Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and New Delhi. The legacy they encompass is an ambiguous one. Anybody who attended the meeting organised by the Conservation Society on the fate of the *chhatri* at the India Gate roundabout in Delhi, will remember the fascinating ideas both for and against the legacy of Lutyens' grand plan. The dilemma is a real one. Think of the slumminess of Nehru Place and Bhikaji Cama Place (Delhi's contribution to post-Independence industry and enterprise) and contrast it to the still stately corridors of Connaught Place, where even on a harsh summer day it is possible to spend time walking around. An even more spectacular example is surely the Metro – Calcutta's greatest pride and joy. Only recently has the section connecting north Calcutta to the south of the city been opened, solving once and for all the enormous problem of commuter traffic from the north of the city. The great feats of engineering notwithstanding, it is a fact that this underground route to the city's most congested areas would have been impossible without the existence of Central Avenue. Central Avenue, a legacy of the 1930s, was a product of the vision of the English town planner E.P. Richards and the Haussmanian predilections of the Calcutta Improvement Trust. Decried and abused when it was first built for ploughing and bulldozing its way through densely built up Indian settlements, it remained till the Metro was built one of the few accessible thoroughfares in the city.

How does one square up to the legacy of a colonial past? If municipal history is any indication, one will find no dearth of official plans for 'repair and reform' but all of which came to naught because of government disinclination to provide adequate funds, of sometimes deliberate apathy and neglect, of a Kipling grumbling about meddlesome babus in municipal politics, and of the lack of private philanthropy. Nirad Chaudhuri has written how Indian Calcutta had to

wait for its first paved streets till the advent of a nationalist government in the 1920s. Yet it is the same past as harbinger of a Janus-faced modernity, that leaves us at crossroads with many conflicting options. It is perhaps worth exploring Calcutta a little more for with its history, as one of the premier colonial cities, it offers us many insights.

Let us look at one quintessentially Bengali area of residence. The College Street-Cornwallis Street axis (now Bidhan Sarani) is famous for some of the most cherished institutions of the Bengalis. Along this road one would find the Medical College, Calcutta University, Sanskrit College, Presidency College and further up the road the offices of the Brahmo Samaj. And anybody who has walked up Cornwallis Street with Radharaman Mitra's splendid guide in hand will recognise the abode of many a past worthy. Closer inspection reveals this area as not one of original Indian settlement at all. This great axis owed its existence to the enterprise and urging of Lord Wellesley (1799-1804) remembered in history books for having lent to the mercantilist moorings of the East India Company an imperialist edge. He is famous for having declared that he wanted to rule India from a palace and not from a counting house and to this effect he built a great pile in the middle of Calcutta, today the residence of state governors.

Road building commenced during his regime to enhance sanitation and communication. A great thoroughfare to the north was thus planned, parallel to the river, defying the organic growth of the city west to east. Security was one of the primary reasons since Barrackpur, the only other route to the cantonment, was up the river. Besides, by building such a road the British wanted to set an example of the kind of development they wanted in the city. Initially the Bengalis seemed reluctant to move out of the familiar in Chitpore, Barrabazar and Kolutolla. Only a few far-sighted landlords bought up land for later speculation. Till the 1850s, Cornwallis Street looked desolate, given over to scrub and empty plots. But attitudes had begun to change. Modusoodun Gupto (a well known name in the annals of Calcutta's medical history) was to testify in the 1840s before a government commission on the city that he found the areas contiguous to the new axis more healthy than the older settlements. By the last few decades of the 19th century, this area laid out by the British became a favourite place of residence of the Bengali middle classes. In a sense, this was one of the first examples of the success of modern town planning.

Post-modernism teaches us to distrust the regime of reason, great reform schemes and the inherent logic of rectilinear planning. But perhaps it inadequately assesses the fact that sometimes this process is not as unilinear as it looks on the drawing board. A great plan is made and executed, but it survives and acquires a character that the people give to it, not to speak of the possibilities of subtle subversion. Every grand *garibaranda* [*porte-cochere*] becomes at night a place of shelter for the casual labour of the city. Grand plans start acquiring a small grain character.

All was perhaps not unwell with colonial planning. True, its basis was often condescension and racism but, in retrospect, it seems there may be some parts of its legacy that are worth recovering today. The notion that the built legacy (and by the same token, city planning) of the British was alien to Indian history has been current far too long. Wilful indifference can lead us down dangerous alleys. A similar attitude towards our Islamic past ends up in the destruction of the Babri Masjid. The assumption that the colonial past was not shared is playing havoc with history. Besides, it is unfair to the memory of those who spent a lifetime contesting the tall claims of colonialism. The problem is that all of us who critique colonial modernity and valorize tradition, do so from the safe precincts of sanitized flats, safe water supply and close proximity to Yamaha generators. All the critics of Lutyens' Delhi wished they owned flats on Prithviraj Road! Even the intellectual owner of a modest flat in a cooperative housing society in newly developed Patparganj may be unaware of the great thrust of displacement and development that has made his/her place of residence possible.

In rejecting all that colonialism represents not only does one, contrary to all impressions, interpret its character in a monolithic manner, but at the same time one is in danger of throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Often in the name of national development we perpetuate the same inanities and inequities that colonialism heaped on us. In our eagerness to damn the past we run the risk of forgetting that every tradition breeds a counter critique. That is why it is high time that the memory and work of the Scottish town planner and biologist Patrick Geddes needs to be resurrected.

Representing a minor (and perhaps not very successful) idiom of colonial planning, Geddes' work needs to be recovered. He spent many years in the early part of this century studying Indian towns, writing some forty town planning reports. He befriended eminent Indian intellectuals and sympathised with their problems of grappling with issues of development and modernity that colonial rule had brought in its wake. He writes a passionate tribute to Tagore's educational ideals and the biography of his friend, the scientist Jagdish Chandra Bose. Geddes was no idle critic of great colonial projects. Surveying Calcutta he saw the necessity for change. Like any other town planner he wanted more roads built, better sanitation, some demolition of insanitary housing and the creation of green spaces. What appalled him about the work of the Calcutta Improvement Trust, the premier development authority in the city, was that it was doing all this without any reference to existing ground realities. Asked to write a report on Barrabazar, the most intractable of Calcutta localities, Geddes made many interesting suggestions.

But first it is important to understand what Geddes was up against. Plans

had been set afoot to cut broad swathes through Barrabazar in an effort to increase accessibility and improve sanitation, quite oblivious of the human and financial costs. An earlier report had even recommended razing the whole locality to the ground and building a railway station (now across the river at Howrah) there instead!

Two interesting things stand out in Geddes' counter proposals. Firstly, he realised that for all its local characteristics Barrabazar as Calcutta's premier business area was as much a creation of colonial development as anything else. Secondly, his recommendations while drawing on Indian building traditions was well aware that in doing so he was in the process of forging a new interpretation from past material. Geddes' modernity was self-reflexive and critical. Not for him the arrogance of universal prefabricated solutions to local problems. As a self-confessed evolutionist he was appalled that the industrial revolution had unleashed forces without taking into account the biological circumstance of human beings. What he wanted to do was to give direction to the forces of evolution, and not accept the mode of change as it came, as a *fait accompli.*

Geddes wanted to re-plan Barrabazar in such a way that without losing its characteristic density, business could be concentrated in one area, so that building stock in other parts of the locality would once again be available for much needed housing. He wanted the most modern methods of goods handling then available from Germany and America (he was writing in 1919) to be introduced in Calcutta. He envisaged a vast 'Produce Exchange' next to the railway lines of an associated goods depot, goods being lifted vertically from wagons to warehouses with great economy of handling. The upper storeys would house offices, there would be a spacious, well-lit Exchange and even a roof garden for relaxation and business conversation! Anticipating the need for modern business organisation and better utilisation of space, he wanted old residential houses being used as godowns rebuilt as modern warehouses, with offices and shops on the upper floors connected with ramps. Footbridges over lanes would be built to decongest the narrow lanes. This was the modern, utopian side of Geddes' vision but for all his enthusiasm, and in all probability, he misunderstood the constraints working on a colonial economy. He was perhaps too sanguine about the rejuvenating effects of modern organisation without adequately measuring the power which a colonial situation entailed.

But there was more to his vision than just this. On the newly developed warehouses, he not only wanted offices in the upper storeys, but also residential quarters laid out in the traditional Indian courtyard plan. Raising the well of a house a couple of floors made it more accessible to light and air, solving traditional problems of ventilation. Lanes were to be preserved as far as possible, for people liked short cuts and valued quiet and coolness to the bustle of the ordinary street. Acutely sensitive to the needs of casual labour who needed to stay close to their place of work, he, unlike all other planners, wanted more investment in the existing housing stock. Too often he knew that buildings were judged on superficial grounds, inviting their demolition when economical repair could point the way out. The age-old value placed on family homes was to be encouraged to this end.

Instead of improving residential areas by demolishing whole blocks of buildings, Geddes urged instead the removal of individual insanitary houses. The space thus created could be converted into small open areas and parks, special 'purdah gardens' meant only for women, or sanctified by plantation of sacred trees and the establishment of local shrines. This plan, which Geddes called 'conservative surgery', invited the derision of the authorities who were convinced that small open spaces would rapidly turn into local dumping grounds for refuse. Yet wherever such areas have survived (with a little bit of ingenuity) they have lived up to the expectation that Geddes placed on them.

Recently, I discovered one such park, whose creation may have come about in a casual sort of way. On the busiest and most polluted road (Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg) in Delhi, are situated the offices of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Auditor General of India. Both these amorphous-looking buildings form a semi-circle, in the centre of which is an enclosed park. It has recently received attention and acquired a new name, a rather long one, which came about no doubt in a fit of bureaucratic zeal and reads, if translated, as 'For-the-good-of-the-people, the Truth-Perseverance Park' (in Hindi *Lok-hitarth, Satya-nishtha Udyan*). If one can ignore this attempt at inculcating babu virtues, and instead enter the garden, it is possible to understand what Geddes meant when he was talking of the possibility of creating coolness, quiet and repose in the middle of even the most congested of areas. Not to speak of the space that it makes for the Teachers' Unions to sit on *dharna* as and when the UGC turns recalcitrant! No doubt we have to thank the same nameless bureaucrat who gave this garden its rather cumbersome name. If only one cared to look, other examples would doubtless come to mind. Lutyens created roundabouts, covered with grass, laced with flowers, a permanent contribution to Delhi's grace.

We all want to live in cities which are blessed with a variety of character, but only if it is underpinned by the most modern amenities. How many times have we wished for more *sulabh shauchalayas*, every time we espy gentlemen with weak bladders staining public walls. But in our zeal to embrace the modern, we often forget to include little considerations that in the end make all the difference. To come back to where I began. By empathising with a colonial past, I meant the possibilities that seemed to open up, once the order of the modern city seemed inevitably upon us. Patrick Geddes, and many others like him, wanted to seize this opportunity to create something endearing and humane. The past at all times has something to offer to all of us.

The 'Third Wave' option

SAYED S SHAFI

IN AN era of economic reform and liberalisation what needs to be reiterated is that the viability of our cities, their efficiency and sustainability are prerequisites for the country's future growth and sound development. Our policy-makers must realise that while some 15 years ago less than one-third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) was produced in the urban centres, it has today climbed to almost 60%. From being a traditional, rural economy India is fast emerging as an economy that is getting tuned to the functions of urban dynamics. As Naseer Munjee of India's Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC) pointed out: 'cities are central to the economic potential of nations, for they are the engines that support and nurture the hinterland'.[1]

However, with the advent of globalisation and the introduction of multinational corporations (MNCs), the economies of even the more important countries 'are no longer determined solely by their importance to the domestic propensities alone, international influences are an important part of this process'[2] so that some cities like London, Singapore, Hong Kong are fast emerging as global centres of enterprise. Our ability to deal with the complexities of urbanisation in a satisfactory manner will, to a large extent, determine the future status of India as a nation.

1. Naseer Munjee, 'Future Prospects of the World City', *Sunday Times of India*, January 1995
2. Ibid.

Long known for its villages and agricultural economy, a scanning of India's demographic trends (Table 1) indicates that whereas at the beginning of the 20th century (1901) India's urban population was less than 11% (25.8 million); soon after independence (in 1951) it was 17.29% (62.4 million). The 1991 Census indicates almost 26% (217.2 million) people to be living in urban areas. According to the current estimates (December 1995), whereas the population of India is reckoned as 937 million, the urban component is already around 30% or 281.2 million. By the year 2001, when India's population is likely to be about one billion, the share of the urban component (varying between 33.5 to 35.1%) would mean an urban population ranging between 335-351 million.

In terms of the growth of urban centres during 1901-1991 (Table 2), at the beginning of the century (1901), there were 1,811 urban areas and the number of cities (100,000 and above) was 24; at that time (1901) there was only one city, (Calcutta) which had a population of over a million and was the second largest city in the British Empire. Some 50 years later in 1951, whereas the number of urban centres reached 2,795, India had 76 cities and there were 5 metro cities (Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Madras and Hyderabad). By 1991, the Census of India enumerated 3,609 urban centres, the number of cities had grown to 300 and there were 24 metro cities (including

TABLE 1

The Pace of Urbanisaton (1901-2001)

Year	Population Total (in millions)	Urban	%	Annual Exponential growth Rate
1901	238 4	25.8	10.84	—
1951	361.0	62.4	17.29	3.47
1961	439 2	78.9	17.97	2.34
1971	548 1	109 4	19.91	3.21
1981	683 3	159 5	23.34	3.83
1991	844.3	217 2	25.72	3.09
1985*	937.1	281.2	30.01	
2001*	1000.0	335.0	33.50	
		351 0	35.10	

*Estimates by the Author
Source. Census of India 1991, Statement 8, Paper 2.

TABLE 2

Growth of Urban Centres (1901-2001)

Year	Urban Areas	Number of cities (100,000+)	Metro-cities (one-million+)
1901	1811	24	1
1951	2795	76	5
1961	2270	102	9
1971	2476	148	10
1981	3245	216	12
1991	3609	300	24+
1995			30
2001			40

* *Includes Srinagar*
Source· Census of India 1991, Statement 8, Paper 2

Srinagar in Kashmir) with a population of over one million..

As of December 1995, the number of metro cities is reported to be 30; by the year 2001, there will be at least 40 metro cities each with a population of one million or more.[3] A scan of population trends indicates that while in 1901 only 5.8% of the total urban population was living in one metro city (Calcutta), the total share of the 1901 urban population living in cities was 26%; in 1991, while 70.6 million persons were counted in the metro-centres, their share of population reached almost one-third of all the urban population, so that altogether in 1995, these 300 cities claimed 65% of all urban population of the country.[4]

Population projections indicate that by the year 2001, India may emerge as a country with the largest (or the second largest)* urban population in the world and still be demographically classed rural! Planners and politicians must therefore define and provide for an acceptable quality of life capable of furnishing basic urban services to a predominantly rural population.

Some years ago (1989), it was pointed out that 'perhaps no other field of human endeavour reflects such an utter lack of policy direction and dearth of fresh ideas than the area of spatial planning'.[5] The consequences of growth-without-direction are now increasingly becoming apparent: in the first place, the living conditions of our habitats – rural and urban – are well set on a path of decay and deterioration. The environmental situation has become truly alarming. Lack of policy is leading to an endless drift towards large metro-cities. 'A syndrome is getting set wherein even the basie necessities to sustain life are getting difficult to secure'.[6]

Take water: Substantial urbanised areas of almost all our major urban centres, particularly the larger metropolitan cities, remain unserviced by municipal water supply systems. Moreover, in cities like Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras, the water distribution mains are long due for replacement whereas a large number of newly urbanised areas remain without protected water supply.

On 4 December 1995, India's Supreme Court viewed with grave concern that in the nation's capital (said to be the most pampered city in the country), water from the Yamuna is 'unfit for human consumption'! It is not an exaggeration to say that Mathura and Agra are virtually living on the untreated effluents discharged from Delhi because as many as 17 major *nullahs* drain their untreated sullage directly into the Yamuna, their source of drinking water.

Then, consider environmental sanitation (solid waste collection and disposal and sewerage system), where the situation is worse: 'Not a single Indian city can claim to have its entire urban area fully covered by a sewer system, or by any alternate system.' Solid waste collection and its regular disposal has now emerged as a major problem creating serious health hazards. Responding to a public interest litigation, the Supreme Court of India has directed the authorities concerned in the nation's capital 'to effectuate an effective garbage disposal system without delay'. It also ordered the shifting and relocation of a large number (over 9,500) of industrial units outside Delhi from the 'non-conforming areas' because they are found to be obnoxious, hazardous and/or dangerous.

Where electric supply is concerned no city in India, including Delhi, is immune to extremely erratic service and regular load-shedding.

Then take shelter: Housing is becoming difficult to find even for the

* Second, because urban population trends in China are rather unpredictable. During the period of 'great cultural revolution', the 'great leap forward', China was able to re-locate and physically shift close to 60 million people from large cities to 'the new frontier areas' (including Tibet and Sinkiang), a deed totally unprecedented in the annals of urbanization. Presently, however, urbanization has gained a new spurt and well-known cities (like Shanghai) are increasing at a rate of some 6-8% per annum.

3 Census of India 1991, Statement 89, Para 2, Registrar General of India Refer also, *Urban Statistics Handbooks for 1994 and 1995*, National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi.

4 Census of India 1991, Statement 8, para 2. Also see Sudhansu Ramade, 'A Nation on the Move', *The Hindu*, 25 December 1994

5 Sayed Shafi, 'Urbanisation: Spatial Planning Needed' 1 and 2, a critical review of the Final Report of the National Commission on Urbanisation 1988, *Patriot*, 16 and 17 February 1989.

6. Ibid, *Patriot*, 17 February 1989.

educated professional middle classes leading to ever increasing congestion in the existing dwellings resulting in extremely high densities. Only two decades ago a young executive could find a *barsati* in Delhi at an affordable rent; now even the so-called servant's quarter (one room and toilet) is rented at around Rs. 3000 a month in South Delhi. At the same time, there is an unprecedented proliferation of squatter clusters (*jhuggi jhonpris/jhonpar pattis*). The nation's capital is said to have more than a thousand (1071 to be precise) of them sheltering around two million people as of 1995.[7]

The consequences of unplanned urbanisation are becoming more apparent with every passing year. Despite the presence of powerful authorities, no organisation or institution seems interested in finding viable solutions to improve the living conditions of even the prime metropolitan cities. Meanwhile Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore and other metro cities continue to attract thousands of new migrants every year (Delhi: 250,000; Bombay: over 300,000; Bangalore: 200,000 per year).

Not only is land used in an illegal and unauthorised manner with mushrooming 'unauthorised colonies', squatter clusters and pavement dwellers, intolerable levels of congesting can be discerned in the built-up inner core areas of our metropolitan cities. Violation of building bye-laws, zoning regulations and land-use controls, such as there are, are flouted, plan or no plan. The city development plans are largely ignored or circumvented. While this has resulted in seriously overloading an already dilapidated infrastructure, it has simultaneously accentuated environmental problems as well, what with an utterly inadequate public transport system.

The rise in migration of people from rural areas and small towns to big cities has resulted in an acute shortage of housing leading to urban unrest and violence. 'A high degree of poverty and social alienation can be observed at the centre of India's urban crisis', stated K.K. Bhatnagar of HUDCO.[8] It is 'compounded by institutional and managerial shortcomings, disregard for the environment and human consequences or economic activities, urban violence and a loss of compassion for the weak. Millions are living in poverty without adequate shelter, safe water supply, minimum sanitation facilities.'[9]

Thus, 'many of our cities are rather becoming the theatres of both change and conflict'[10] and pose a host of critical questions. Given the Indian situation, what are the alternatives and options available? Must we necessarily follow the path other urbanised countries have traversed, namely to get keyed to a handful of mega-cities and metropolitan centres? Or are there other feasible options available? How should employment and industrial development be interwoven into a meaningful strategy securing development of viable human settlements? What should be the essential components of a national urbanization policy? And how should the considerable regional disparities and differentials be accommodated? How should squatter settlements, pavement-dwellers and the unorganised (informal) economic sectors of the urban communities be made to play a meaningful role in the development of our communities? What should be the role of our traditional towns forming the 'inner cores' of our large metropolitan cities like Allahabad, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Madurai, Hyderabad – to name only a few? What importance should be assigned to both natural and man-made heritage? And how can we manage the emerging environmental issues? Is it possible to deliberately direct or induce migration to the comparatively less developed towns, regions or states of the Union and can they be planned to share a greater share of anticipated urbanisation?

In the early 1960s, alternative urbanisation strategies were contemplated by Indian planners: One was to give special emphasis to the development of carefully selected small and medium towns and cities (evenly distributed throughout the country) as alternate 'poles of growth' by augmenting their basic urban infrastructure and promoting new enterprise. The underlying idea was to generate employment opportunities away from large cities. Another was to identify and assign a special role to a number of towns and cities around and in the 'orbit-of-influence' of India's well-known metro cities. In Delhi, they were termed as 'ring-towns' and 'counter-magnets',[11] which lay beyond the daily commuting distances.

Today there are more than 3600 urban centres. Any urbanisation policy should take this factor into account because the integrated development of small and medium towns may help deflect some people from drifting towards the larger cities in search of livelihood. Such places could also be assigned significant roles in the development of the rural economy to service the agricultural hinterlands.

Town planning, housing, urban development, including the provision of urban services, have invariably been treated as a minor footnote in the national planning exercise. Physical spatial planning has been treated as 'a mere appendage to economic development' not as something that should permeate the entire national and state planning process. Sadly, national and regional level planning has remained devoid of this vital spatial dimension.

Thus when in 1985 Rajiv Gandhi designated an exclusive ministry to deal with all matters concerning housing and urban development, he raised some hope. This was followed by the constitution of a National Commission on Urbanisation (NCU) to formulate viable policy alternatives and strategies so as

7. Ibid.

8. Foreword by K.K. Bhatnagar (HUDCO) in Kulwant Singh and F. Steinberg, *Urban India in Crisis*, HSMI and Institute of Housing and Urban Development Studies, Rotterdam, Holland, 1995; and Newage International, New Delhi, 1995.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid

11. See John P. Lewis, *Quiet Crisis in India*, Brooking Institution, Washington DC, USA, 1962.

to channelise urban growth in desired directions. The final NCU report released in August 1988 contained some 78 recommendations. Although the Government of India 'accepted all the recommendations in principle', in practice, the recommendations of the NCU were never incorporated into time-bound plans and hardly any of its numerous recommendations have actually been translated into viable programmes.[12]

As the 21st century dawns, Indian cities and towns will become the focal points of change. An important part of the urban landscape will be a large number of urban centres, mostly small and medium towns, scattered all over the country. Many of these cities and towns have existed for centuries; they have their own propensities of growth and development and many of them still play a significant role where the articulation of rural communities and their economies are concerned. Moreover, many such towns, particularly in the outer peripheries of large urban centres, can play a positive role by deflecting a part of the flow of migrants into the metros.

With the enactment of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution, small and medium towns will acquire new spatial and political importance, especially in the regional context. It is now up to the politicians and planners to assign them constructive roles in the overall perspective of urbanisation. Carefully planned, they can be made viable instruments of social change and transformation. They can be planned as centres for accommodating a significant part of the migration of people from rural areas primarily to the large cities. But developing such towns would entail substantial investments in their infrastructure and civic amenities which, in turn, calls for revamping the Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) programme initiated in the sixth five year plan.

12. Final Report, National Commission on Urbanisation 1988. Also the First Interim Report, 1985.

Indeed, India's urban prospects demand fresh and innovative approaches and new strategies for planning and design-ing habitats. For this, Indian planners will have to develop an expertise and norms appropriate to our peculiar circumstances. As Ashok Khosla of Development Alternatives pointed out: 'a development style that improves everyone's life today without jeopardising the lives of our children's tomorrow...' so that 'the primary purpose of any development activity must be to create livelihoods – sustainable livelihoods. Sustainable livelihoods create incomes for people, give meaning to their lives and do not destroy the environment'.[13]

Energy, shelter and work places are intertwined and exert a formative influence in the evolution and development of human habitats. For a country like India, at the threshold of urban transformation, where some cities have doubled in size within a single decade or two, this has far-reaching implications. However, most of us have not appreciated the enormity of the impending change and its consequences on living patterns and habitat forms. We have much to learn from our traditional towns and local vernacular built-forms as also from a variety of locally evolved architectural styles.

Traditional Indian towns had a built-in nexus between the places of work and living. For example, millions of handloom workers normally use their homes for earning a living, whether in Kashmir or Kerala, Avadh or Assam. This situation is still available in small towns. In a big city, however, this intimate relationship is distorted and a majority are forced to commute long distances for work which creates its own set of problems, sapping time and energy. Planners and architects must find a way out of this anomaly in the future Indian habitat.

The first Delhi Plan (1962-81) envisaged a polycentric/polynodal form for the metropolis.[14] Many significant lessons need to be learnt from our *desi* or vernacular architectural forms and traditional habitats which have acquired a new relevance today.

It is seldom realised that development is not only an economic process aided or augmented by technology but has an all pervasive social dimension as well. Most importantly, it remains to be acknowledged that almost all economic developments have a physical and spatial dimension. So far, our national planning exercise and the five year plans have remained space-less![15] And this has inevitably led to a host of avoidable environmental catastrophes (Bhopal, Chas Nullah, Jwala Nagar in Delhi).

Given the Indian context and its democratic secular polity, a basic imperative before planners and policy-makers in the coming decades will be to provide meaningful employment to 3-4 million new entrants to the labour force every year. In my view (*a*) urban development, (*b*) provision of housing (shelter), (*c*) appropriate modes of urban transportation that includes construction of roads and transit lines, and (*d*) the development of basic infrastructure (water supply, sanitation, solid waste collection and disposal) together provide enormous potential to furnish meaningful employment to large numbers of people. However, the planning and management of the situation demand fresh thinking, innovative approaches and new methodologies.

Traditional value systems and social institutions, both in rural and urban areas, are in a state of flux. The horrendous disturbances that overtook cities like Bombay, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Surat following the Ayodhya demolition were, to a significant extent, due to urban dysfunction and the opportunity it provided to the urban mafia to get lands cleared of squatter settlements.[16] In a caveat,

13. Ashok Khosla, *Development Alternatives Newsletter* 5(11), November 1995.

14. *Work Studies of Delhi Master Plan: 1962-81*, published by Town Planing Organization and DDA, Delhi, 1962.

15. Patwant Singh and Ram Dhamija: *Delhi: The Deepening Urban Crisis*, Sterling Publishers, Delhi, 1989. Also see, Sayed S. Shafi, 'Lack of Spatial Dimension in National Planning and Alternative Paths to India's Urban Future' in *Mainstream*.

16. A.R. Wig, 'Delhi: An Unplanned Capital', *Hindustan Times*, 12 October 1995; 'Crisis?',

C.R. Irani points out the appalling living conditions that have been allowed to perpetuate in the country's largest metropolis (Mumbai), people who have connived with, and even encouraged, hoodlums in setting up huge slum areas: '...these slumlords are especially useful to the politicians during the election...they are indispensable'. (*The Statesman*, 5 January 1996)

There is still time to think and plan the future in a careful and sensitive manner, pursing alternatives for 'sustainable development'. In this quest, one must develop a genuine understanding of the country's unparalleled heritage, biodiversity and environment and look with renewed respect at local vernacular forms. So far, however, little research had been undertaken on how to address the issues of unemployment, illiteracy, shelter, poverty and environmental pollution in an integrated manner.

The problems encountered by India are pertinent to other third world countries as well. Of course, the phenomenon is unprecedented because never in the history of civilization has so much happened in such a short time. There are few parallels from where meaningful lessons could be learnt. It has been pointed out that by astonishing contrast, 'the Third Wave civilisation could turn out to have many features – decentralised production, appropriate scale, renewable energy, deurbanisation, work-in-the-home, to name just a few – that actually resemble those found in the First Wave (agricultural) societies. We are seeing something that looks remarkably like a dialectical return.'[17]

The question that acquires relevance is: Would it not be feasible for some underdeveloped countries (like India) to introduce the Third Wave systems than to industrialise first in the traditional manner, suffer the agonies and disruptions, undergoing painful mistakes to ultimately reach the Third Wave urbanscape? Or in other words, is it possible to skip or bypass some of the Second Wave syndromes? In *The Third Wave*, Alvin Toffler contemplates and wonders:

> It is now possible, moreover, as it was not in the past, for a society to attain a high material standard of living without obsessively focusing all its energies on production for exchange. Given the wider range of options brought by the Third Wave, cannot a people reduce infant mortality and improve life span, literacy, nutrition and the general quality of life without surrendering its spiritual values and necessarily embracing the Western materialism that accompanies the spread of Second Wave civilisation?[18]

Toffler predicts that tomorrow's development designs 'will come not from Washington, Moscow, London or Paris, but from Africa, Asia and Latin America'.[19] Again: 'They will be indigenous, matched to actual local needs. They will not over-emphasize economics at the expense of ecology, culture, religion or family structure and psychological dimensions of existence.'[20]

I feel strongly that developing countries must not copy out-of-date models that have lost relevance even in the countries of their origin. Thus, it is argued that the Third Wave option: 'provide the world's poorest nations, as well the rich, wholly new opportunities, and a possibility to combine elements of the past and future in improving the present and future as well!'[21]

In a recent article, John Cuniff points out that as it is 'as many as 24 million US adults use the Internet.... For users, their home in a sense has become office, school, library, museum, theater and work place, and may become the voting both of the future – as well as a place to raise a family and spend more time with them'. He goes on to state that 'the new community saves time, eliminates distance and ignores cultural differences, so that individuals 10000 miles apart and with utterly dissimilar life experiences might find more in common than they do with the family across the street.... the new community encompasses the world interacting electronically, transporting information than people.'[22]

Indeed, microelectronic technology lends itself to an unprecedented decentralisation of productive effort. Reduced migrations to big cities, besides miniaturisation, could radically reduce transportation costs and soul-killing daily commuting. As Roger Melen of 'The Standard' pointed out:

> The industrial world moved everybody into the cities for production and now we are moving the factories and work centres back into the country; but many nations have never really switched from a seventeenth century agrarian economy, including China it now appears, that can integrate new manufacturing techniques into the society without moving entire populations.[23]

There are other possibilities that have latent potential and can activate new technological breakthroughs for many of third world countries like India. And Toffler believes that, 'The very features of ancient civilisations that seem backward could be potentially advantageous when measured against the template of the advancing Third Wave'.[24]

Thus as we look towards the future, planning and development demand a re-definition, one which explicitly acknowledges the spatial dimension in its myriad manifestations at various levels and scales, where the future of the Indian habitat (whether rural or urban) is articulated on principles that provides not just economic growth in the conventional sense, but social equity ensuring a quality of life which provides dignity to everyone.

Mainstream, 14 January 1995; also see Patwant Singh, *Of Dreams and Demons. A Memoir*, Rupa, New Delhi, 1994

17 Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*, William Marrow and Company, New York, 1980

18. Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22. John Cuniff, *The Pioneer*, 6 January 1996.

23. Ibid.

24. Op cit

The crisis in municipal services

S. SAMI AHMAD

AS INDIA becomes increasingly urbanised, there is a growing consciousness that urbanisation, besides being a natural consequence of economic change, has played a crucial role in the country's overall development and had far reaching implications. At present, 26% of India's population stays in cities which are the nerve centres of all economic, social and political activities. Their relative prosperity and high production potential are manifested in an ever-growing share of the urban sector in the national income. In 1950-51 its contribution to India's gross domestic product (GDP) was only 29%, which increased to 47% in 1980-81 and is likely to rise to 60% by the turn of the century (Government of India, 1992:344).

Nevertheless, local governments have been unable to translate the vast resources of the urban sector into liveable cities, capable of meeting the basic civic needs of the people. While cities are rapidly expanding in population and area, local bodies have failed to execute even a minimum of obligatory municipal services such as water supply, sanitation, drainage and garbage disposal which have a direct and immediate impact on people's lives and welfare, not to speak of discretionary ones (Siddiqui, 1992: 56). As a result, almost all cities in India, irrespective of their size, suffer from a grossly inadequate provision of these services due to a widening gap between demand and supply.

The most important municipal service epitomizing this inadequacy is the supply of safe water. Between 1981 and 1991, the number of urban households with access to safe drinking water merely increased from 74 to around 82% (Census of India 1991a), indicating the low priority municipalities gave to the improvement of water supply system despite rapidly increasing urbanisation in the country. This despite the fact that the period 1981-90 was declared as the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, dedicated to cover the entire urban population with protected water supply. That such efforts failed is clear from the fact that 18% of urban households in the country still do not get safe drinking water from a tap or a handpump/tubewell and depend on unhygienic water sources like well and surface water. Thus, they are exposed to various waterborne diseases from regular use of contaminated water. Women of poor households are particularly affected by this.

Households in small towns are the worst victims of an inefficient system of water supply: in many instances, as much as half of the population remains deprived of safe drinking water (Kundu, 1993:200). Even where it is available, short and erratic delivery is a common problem compelling a number of households to pay private contractors for providing water at a cost many times higher than the official rate.

The shortage of proper sanitation is another aspect of the crumbling municipal services in India. A recent survey shows that over 24% urban households in the country are without any toilet facility (IIPS, 1995:58). Obviously, they mostly comprise the poor who, due to their low paying capacity and settlement patterns, use rivers, streams, canals, gullies and ditches instead. Only 42% urban households, mostly in high income groups, have private toilets. The remaining 58% households share toilets with others, particularly in the low income areas where the civic authorities instal community toilets (Kundu, 1993:208). Long hours of waiting, lack of proper maintenance, choked drains and shortage of water characterise these community latrines, giving rise to a number of health problems.

It is a healthy sign that in urban houses flush toilets now constitute nearly 80% of all toilet facilities. Still, a substantially high proportion of 20% houses, especially those belonging to low income groups, continue to use a service latrine, a source of insanitation and pollution. The government, through municipalities, is presently implementing a scheme of low-cost sanitation, but experience shows that it has not reached the most needy sections.

Although sewerage is considered the most hygienic way for disposal of sewage and sullage water, it was only available in 12% cities in the country in the early 1980s: now it is estimated that nearly 18% cities have partial sewerage and treatment facilities. Yet even where it exists, the capacity is too low to satisfy the requirements and sewage disposal is a major civic problem in Indian cities. Despite a recommendation by the National Master Plan of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade that Class I cities (pop. 100,000 and above) should have a sewerage system covering at least 80% population, a serious shortfall remains. Besides, a number of small and medium size towns do not have sewerage at all.

The condition of drainage in cities is no better since almost 30% urban population remains unserved by drainage networks. In about one-third of the urban centres more than 40% of the population lives without any drainage system. Moreover, the existing drainage network is not maintained properly. As a result, water-logging is a common problem in many urban neighbourhoods which breeds mosquitoes, flies and other insects.

Garbage disposal is traditionally one of the most neglected aspects of municipal services. Ironically, no norms or standards have been worked out for its effective functioning. Although it has been suggested that municipalities should collect and dispose off the entire waste generated in their jurisdiction to avoid an unhealthy environment, a large disparity exists between the level of garbage generated and disposed in every city, indicating the operational inefficiency of the municipal management. Commonly, 30-50% of the solid waste generated within urban centres is left uncollected. While private sweepers dump the collected domestic garbage in municipal bins, municipal sweepers do not come to clean streets and bins regularly. The result is garbage accumulation on streets and open spaces.

There are a host of other crucial municipal services which also suffer from problems of inefficient delivery. A study of the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) reveals that, in general, municipalities do not own and run hospitals or large-scale dispensaries. In a majority of cases they provide only preventive health services, such as vaccination. Thus, the medical facilities provided by them are inadequate. As for street lighting, in a substantial number of cities the percentage of lit roads is even below 50% (NIUA, 1989:53). Furthermore, population growth and territorial expansion of cities is also causing increasing road congestion; consequently, transport problems have intensified, leading to a virtual breakdown of the traffic system in many places. In recent years the dramatic increase in the number of vehicles without any corresponding expansion of road space is causing difficulty to the urban populace. Public transit shortage in most large cities has promoted traffic heterogeneity which not only impedes traffic but also adversely affects the safety of the road users (NCU, 1989:264).

Municipal services are particularly inadequate in metropolitan cities. In recent years, such cities have witnessed a tremendous increase in population. For example, during 1981-91 the percentage decadal growth rate of Mumbai was 52.5, Delhi 46, Hyderabad 68 and Vishakhapatnam 74. Now a total of 23 metropolitan cities accommodate over 32% of the country's urban population (Census of India, 1991 b).

In the absence of any major expansion of basic amenities, the growing concentration of people in these few cities is placing great pressure on existing municipal services. Not surprisingly then, in Madras, the per capita water supply per day (LCPD) is a mere 78 litres against the standard of 225 LCPD, while in Bangalore and Calcutta it is 90 LCPD (Fernandes, 1994:17). Public utilities cannot treat enough drinking water and they lose more than a third of the output to inefficiency and theft. Consequently, there is an apparent decline in the living standards of a majority of residents. The data collected from the nine largest metros of the country reveal that on an average only 72% houses are supplied with water and electricity.

Similarly, the sewage and garbage disposal facilities in the metros are in a shambles. In Mumbai, 1800 million litres of untreated domestic sewerage and industrial effluents are discharged into the sea every day. In Calcutta, only 29% population is connected to the sewerage system, while in Madras it is 31%. In

many localities of Madras the frequent sharp showers result in the spilling of sewage water on to the streets because of an interconnection between the storm drainage and the sewage lines. The overloaded and often ill-maintained pumping stations also discharge sewage into the city's waterways. Particularly in Delhi, Madras and Bangalore, the sewerage system is heavily overloaded and untreated sewage flows into water bodies. The Yamuna in Delhi alone receives 200 million litres of untreated sewage every day.

What is more shocking is that over the years there has been an increasing maldistribution of the municipal services which shows no sign of reversal. Overcrowded and under-serviced, the inner parts and resettlement colonies of urban conglomerations face the problem of dwindling municipal services since these areas are characterised by dilapidated and unauthorised housing structures, poorly maintained roads, corroded water pipes and overflowing drains. Contrary to this, newly developed localities inhabited by the affluent get a remarkably high investment for, and a better maintenance of, municipal services.

In many cities the gap with regard to the access of these services between the well-off and those at the bottom of the social hierarchy is astonishing. For example, in Ahmedabad the wealthier 25% population consumes 90% of the water supplied, the remaining 75% population has to make do with only 10% of the water (Wegelin, 1994:205). The disparity between the lower and upper fractiles in terms of sanitation facilities is significantly higher than the water supply.

The rapid suburbanisation and slumming of industrial and commercial cities has intensified the maldistribution of municipal services. In these cities, suburbs are emerging as the residential and commercial poles of the main territory where the local bodies are completely unable to cope with a growing demand for municipal services in the mushrooming colonies, business centres and industrial estates. Besides, the large number of private vehicles, an overburdened public transport system and traffic heterogeneity, makes the roads connecting the central city with the suburbs congested and the traffic chaotic. An effective, rapid, high-capacity mass transit facility is not yet in sight for most cities undergoing the process of suburbanisation.

Suburbanisation has been accompanied by the consistent creation and proliferation of slums. It is estimated that 25-30% of the country's urban population is comprised of slum dwellers and during the decade 1981-91 the slum population increased by 83% as against 36% growth rate of the urban population. The pattern of higher slum population growth is expected to continue in the future as well with greater concentration in metropolises and other fast growing industrial cities.

In fact, a metropolis like Mumbai already accommodates 50% of its population in slums. Mostly occupied by poor rural migrants, these settlements are extremely ill-supplied with the essential municipal services. In Calcutta and Mumbai, the supply of water to slums through public stand post is about 75 LCPD and 90 LCPD respectively which is much less compared to the 220 LCPD and 130 LCPD water supplied in the non-slum areas. Moreover, water supply is not available in all the slums even through public stand posts either due to their distance from existing pipelines or because of inadequate water supply. Where there is no tap in the locality, water has to be brought from a long distance. As a result, the per capita water consumed in localities without tap connections is very small compared to those with connections.

The deprivation of the slum dwellers has also compelled them to use the municipal services illegally at great personal risk. For example, in Delhi, slum dwellers draw their own power with hooks thrown over electric lines passing nearby, frequently leading to short circuits and devastating fires every year where hundreds of slum hutments go up in smoke.

In view of the severe problem of municipal services in slums, the government has launched some programmes for their improvement such as Urban Community Development (UCD), Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS), Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns (IDSMT) and the Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP). However, given the magnitude of the problem, the impact of these programmes has been limited. A study assessing the role of the UBS (till 1990, UBSP was known as UBS) in improving the living conditions of slum dwellers has shown that despite more than five years of implementation, the programme could not make much headway (Ghosh, Ahmad and Maitra, 1995:275). On the basis of sample surveys conducted in the slums of Baroda, Bhilwara, Sambalpur and Siliguri, it was found that on an average 56% households have no access to tap water, 63% are without toilets, 68% without drainage and almost 98% without access to dustbins for garbage disposal.

The study further revealed that while people's awareness about UBS is pathetically low, most beneficiaries of its various schemes are the better-off slum dwellers. They have independent toilets and a better water supply system. The poorest section is more dependent on community services which are not always available.

The consequences of inadequate municipal services are there for everyone to see. A high level of water pollution due to inefficient sewerage system or improper solid waste disposal, contamination of water and poorly prepared and maintained landfill sites in our cities are some visible signs of this phenomenon. Besides, it has endangered the health of the inhabitants and produced a disease pattern typical of underdevelopment with frequent cases of cholera, typhoid, diarrhoea, malaria and dysentry. Where the density of population is high, the danger of these diseases are especially great.

The high point of such a morbidity pattern was the 1994 outbreak of the

plague in Surat, one of India's leading industrial centres. During the last two decades, especially since the '80s, heavy industries like petrochemicals, steel, fertilizers, power and so on, have come up in and around the city, resulting in a manifold increase in its importance. Rapid industrialisation has been accompanied by a massive population increase in the city. However, despite the wealth and resources generated by industrialisation in Surat, the quality of life is poor as municipal services are inadequate for an overwhelming section of the population. Severe shortage of safe drinking water and lack of proper waste disposal and sanitation facilities have created extremely unhygienic and insanitary conditions in a large part of the city which proved ideal for the plague organisms to flourish. This single incidence has exemplified the growing discordance between the country's lopsided urban growth and the provision of municipal services.

Congestion and overcrowding aggravate the unhealthy environment and increase the probability of infectious diseases like tuberculosis, influenza and meningitis, particularly in the slums. Their spread is often helped by the low resistance of malnourished slum dwellers. A recent study of Delhi slums has shown that on an average 9% slum dwellers are ill every day and 46% of them suffer from unspecified fevers which rises to 60% in very poor households. In the slums without sewerage and potable water supply, digestive and respiratory disorders account for more than 30% of illnesses. The hazardous living conditions of these settlements have caused a high infant mortality rate – 96% people do not survive beyond 45 years which is considerably lower than the average life expectancy of 60 years at the all India level.

The deplorable state of municipal services clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of our municipalities It has been argued that financial constraints hinder their ability to produce and distribute services adequately and efficiently, leading to a disequilibrium between demand and supply. There is a great deal of truth in this argument. Since the revenue base of the municipalities does not increase in proportion to the factors causing increase in expenditure, about 86% of them incur a per capita expenditure below the suggested norm of the Zakaria Committee for the operation and maintenance of urban services. Paucity of funds means that, on an average, municipalities spend only 37% of what they ought to for providing safe drinking water and basic sanitation (NIUA, 1989:VI).

Resources have been systematically declining. This is reflected in the sliding allocation of funds to the urban development sector in India's successive five year plans, decline in the share of municipalities in the total public expenditure at all levels and by a wide hiatus between the desired and actual per capita expenditure on core urban services. However, it must be remembered that municipalities in India suffer from an inefficient and corrupt system of tax collection, which leads to tremendous loss of revenue and increasing financial pressure.

Secondly, the local bodies generally perform their developmental functions in an uncoordinated manner with para-statal organisations, contributing to conflict and loss of accountability. These include development authorities, housing boards, slum clearance boards, water and sewerage authorities among others. Though these bodies function within the city limits, they are not answerable to local bodies. The multiplication of such organisations has created a conflicting situation in urban governance where municipal services become the responsibility of local bodies, whereas almost the entire capital input into city expansion, together with the resulting profits, fall to the functional share of the organisations or development authorities.

Besides, a substantial part of expenditure goes into maintaining a large administration and for non-developmental tasks involving irregular and wasteful expenditure. Thus little is left for municipal services and other development activities. Finally, there is always certain kind of gap between people and municipal officials who remain alienated from the public. In fact, more often than not, these officials consider the flourishing of local leadership and local level social and political activities of the people a serious threat to their authority, influence and power. This syndrome causes issues to get bogged down in red tape.

The lack of a civic sense among most people has also contributed to the present crisis in municipal services. They have developed a tendency to accept dirt and filth as part of their daily life and hardly ever raise the demand for better municipal services which, as citizens, is their right. The result of public apathy is that our cities remain dirty. A highly diversified character of the city population hampers community participation in civic affairs at the grassroots level. People belonging to different income groups and social backgrounds usually interact formally and impersonally and do not come together on a self-sustaining basis to participate in a wide range of community level services for their common benefit. Even in slums, where nowadays community participation is being promoted as the buzzword, the tendency to social disintegration is often noticed.

Therefore, the promotion of civic consciousness among inhabitants and channelisation of their resources and energies for improving living conditions is a major challenge in our efforts to making cities healthy and clean. The thrust of any initiative aiming to address this challenge should be to impress upon people that instead of expecting various services from the municipality alone, they *themselves* need to collectively take steps for providing and maintaining them. The support of the municipality would be extended for necessary guidance and assistance in their endeavour.

The prevailing scenario of municipal services has prompted many to advocate the revitalisation of the country's urban infrastructure and municipal services by encouraging the private sector in the wake of economic liberalisation. In fact, in some cities the private sector has been entailed for water

supply, garbage disposal and sanitation on a limited scale. But a 'pay and use' policy of the private sector without subsidies will effectively put these services further beyond the reach of a vast majority of the urban poor. Moreover, the private sector is not a genuine and effective institutional substitute for municipalities because this is one organisation which can provide services that are commensurate with the people's needs and take decisions on issues reflecting their aspirations and priorities.

It is now increasingly being realised that a city's demand for municipal services is easier to fulfil if municipalities have people's representatives, are able to finance themselves with demarcated tax revenues and come up with a realistic vision of civic problems. The recently incorporated Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992 has been widely hailed as a measure for strengthening municipalities Some key provisions of the 74th Amendment which are bound to have an impact in this regard are: elected people's representatives will now initiate and implement civic management, no elected body can be superseded by a state legislature at its whims, elections to municipalities will be the responsibility of state election commissions, there will be reserved seats for women, Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the office of mayor and chairperson, and cities with a population of 300,000 and above will have ward committees.

However, the financial stability of municipalities remains the central issue in exploring the possibilities of an improved and efficient provision of municipal services. Although there is ample scope for reform in the municipal tax structure, considering the fact that even the most proficient and well-managed municipalities find their resources inadequate, state governments should not be stingy in sanctioning grants to them. So far there is neither a regular devolution of state funds to municipalities nor are municipal development plans integrated with state plans.

The 74th Amendment has attempted to overcome these problems by constituting state finance commissions which should decide the principles to govern the distribution between the state and municipalities the net proceeds of taxes, duties, tolls and fees leviable by the state; the determination of taxes, duties, tolls and fees which may be assigned to, or appropriated by municipalities; the grants-in-aid to municipalities, and the measures needed to improve their financial position.

It is hoped that the state finance commissions will strengthen municipalities financially, making them competent to invest funds necessary both for the maintenance of existing municipal services and their expansion. The democratic character of municipalities is also expected to evolve a system in which a municipality acts as a catalyst organisation bringing together public representatives, NGOs and officials for promoting an approach towards urban governance which ensures that municipal services are efficiently and uniformly delivered to the people and cities are more liveable and productive.

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Why planning failed

K T. RAVINDRAN

THE coming years will be critical for our cities, not merely because we shall soon complete 50 years of planning under democratic rhetoric or because we are entering a new century but because the rules of the development game have changed and the politics that structured that game is split into a democratic localised *access* to power and a monetarised, global *exercise* of power.

If cities are the crucibles of ideation where the future is imagined, then that imagination needs to be debated quite separately from the politico-economic processes, if only to protect them as public places. The Indian city needs to be re-imagined, from the grandiose Nehruvian symbol of 'progress and scientific ideologies' to a place where the quality of life is nurtured and resourced equitably, and where control over resources is vested in its citizens. The urban object needs to be relocated from being an epiphenomenon of other forms of planning to a crucial, active agent that reinstates Eros as a prime deity in the city.

An overview of opportunities lost over five decades of urban planning in India is necessary to confront the redundancies in the current system and simultaneously develop a viable framework for action. Thus, some of the premises on which urban planning has been based so far need to be reframed. This covers an entire gamut – from the ideological basis of planning to methodologies of plan preparation and implementation, as well as the physical and legislative tools and devices used. The underlying premises of the current urban planning system are identified and critically evaluated to establish the possible directions of change.

Premise 1 – *Past patterns will be repeated in the future as historic events, user behaviour and growth patterns.* The current practice of planning is based on the assumption that industrialisation is the foremost cause for rapid urbanisation in the last century leading to the patterning of hierarchies within cities, the birth of mega cities and subsequent banking and other financial bases. But the communication revolution, by shrinking space requirements and atomising city location, points to a different direction today. Concentration and agglomeration that characterised city growth in the past, the need to congregate for work and giant

structures to house office functions are unlikely to remain the same in the coming decades. Although this is a global trend, capital inputs into these shrunken spaces are increasing in geometric proportions. In such a scenario, planning standards, projections for space requirements (and therefore land requirements) as projected for city growths are bound to go awry.

Is our technocracy equipped to meet this emerging situation? In India no discussion has been organised on these issues. One of the main functions of planning is to recognise a problem before it becomes an emergency. If the present method of urban planning is not revamped, our urban development programmes may be swept off their feet by the winds of economic change.

Premise 2 – *Quantity is the best mode of controlling quality.* Once again, the industrial development logic of quantitative reductionism is at play here reducing people, land and nature itself to numbers. Everything is quantified merely to ratify the need for urban expansion. The result is evident in the form of gross disparities between the master plan and ground realities in every Indian city. The planning process is dehumanised in the name of pseudo-scientific calculations, based on skimpy or incorrect data to begin with and full of hidden assumptions with no accountability.

Premise 3 – *Division of land-use into strict zones leads to efficiency in city functions.* The urban planner is burdened with a set of land-use categories, universally accepted within the fraternity. These are standardised with colour symbols and permitted percentage ranges as city components. They are seen as separate compartments, albeit with interdependencies, functioning in separate zones as in a factory assembly line. For instance, you cannot work from a residential area just as you cannot live in an institutional area. The result is high commercial concentrations and a fragmented city where people have to commute long distances. Due to this pattern of land-use, some corridors have high traffic concentrations while others lie empty. Zoning has thus been one of the most destructive concepts where the wholeness of the city is concerned.

Premise 4 – *Planning is an apolitical profession and politicians alone are to blame for the current state of affairs.* The disposition and physical condition of spaces and forms in a city reflect its power structure. The dichotomies of centre/peripheries, the old city/corporate centre and between the rich/poor are reflected in land values and thereby in the height of buildings, level of infrastructure, maintenance of public areas and, more significantly, in the degree of public access to spaces and buildings. The city structure, in other words, can be seen as a direct representation of power group formations. The planning system, however, refuses to recognise this clearly political connotation of city-form and adopts an ostrich-like attitude calling politics a dirty word. By the same token, politics is considered unfit for inclusion in planning education syllabi. The result is an unintentional or covert support to politically-engineered development modes, while blaming politicians for interfering with an 'altruistic' planning profession.

Under a liberalised economic scenario, the role of politics will further change. In addition to localised political pressures, the thrust of 'big money politics' will affect urban development. This will be aided by the bureaucracy which has been proclaiming the bankruptcy of public bodies while hailing privatisation. Partisan power games inherent in the present urban development scenario will now be out in the open, as decisions on investment move to private investors and banks, while planners tighten control over land and land-use decisions as a bargaining position. This is already manifested in the proposals for mega projects all over the country: massive stadia, convention centres, tourism facilities, golf courses and exclusive eco-parks, none of which have anything to do with public need.

This shift from need-based identification of public projects and investments to money flow based project proposals has ominous portents for the quality of life in our cities. The best locations in the cities will soon be cornered by investors as exclusive domains for high investment and, therefore, expensive public access. The logic of cost recovery demands faster returns giving rise to the need to invest either in crowded areas where land value is already high or environmentally important areas of scenic beauty and other heritage sites. This means that ordinary citizens will lose valuable public assets to rich outsiders, like multinational corporations. Soon our major cities will follow the North American example of 'the Invented Street' where city precincts are bought up by investors to recreate by truthful reproduction an exclusive, controlled ambience of well-known tourist locations for those who can pay, keeping out the 'socially undesirable' people.

For development authorities in India, not equipped to deal with a free market in urban development, the implications of such a situation will be complex. Their present role as benevolent providers of public amenities will have to give way to a hard management one to protect public interest. And the politics of such a role is anybody's guess.

Premise 5 – *Development is equal to expansion.* An important aspect of the master plan exercise is to arrive at a projected population figure, subsequently the basis for future provision of land according to accepted planning standards. Based on the distribution of certain population densities and amenities, calculations are made for future land requirements which are then distributed in directions identified for expansion. In this exercise, a major numbers game in the planning process, is inherent the belief that development means expansion, both horizontal and vertical. Little or no attention is paid to study the existing problems, especially the old cities which are part of every Indian metropolis. While old housing stock and low income areas choke in the absence of a proper physical and social infrastructure, organised and planned commercial centres often remain deserted and ineffective. This leads to spontaneous commercial growth outside the plan

frame to meet the real needs of people. Population figures are overshot in no time since no proper economic plans accompany the physical plan and migrants pour into the city as investments are concentrated in urban areas.

On the other hand, private suburbanised peripheries expand into farmlands only to be brought into urbanisable limits. The scenario is dismal because a scientific means of assessing development potential through morphological studies and urban geography does not exist in the planning system. State-of-the-art technologies are applied in the developing world for assessing growth potential through newly developed interfaces of urban subsystems and super-structures. Our cities continue to swallow agricultural hinterlands in the course of expansion, neglecting the inner cities for which often not even proper bas-maps exist.

Premise 6 – *Planning and planned development are fire fighting measures to mitigate the ill effects of in-migration and therefore planned growth does not cause any in-migration.* The continuing failure of master plan projections in every Indian city in the last four decades has been due to two reasons. First, the plans were unable to assess the real issues in quantitative or qualitative terms. Second, the massive public projects (including roads and flyovers, development of mega commercial centres and other amenities), coupled with private investments in urban development in general, have made the city a haven for job seekers from the impoverished countryside. Thus a major part of the migration is *because* of planned developmental activities and not *in spite* of the plan. If the new economic policy presents investment possibilities in inner cities, which can perhaps be used gainfully to check expansion in the peripheries, it would further aggravate in-migration.

What kind of an urban development strategy does the new economic policy demand? This question requires urgent attention both from academia and the government.

Premise 7 – *Twenty years is a reasonable time span to implement a plan, but at the end of it the planner is not accountable for conditions in the city.* The present system of planning prepares and projects a plan for a period of 20 years Interim reviews are scheduled every five years, but seldom happen. At the end 20 years, a new plan is to be prepared after inviting public objections and securing governmental approval following a debate. It is unclear why this time-frame was first adopted but 20 years have proved far too long to control the pace of urban growth in India. Interim reviews are used to ratify violations under political pressure, not amend errors or provide new directions. In today's context, with globalised communication and transportation revolutions at hand, the urban development process is bound to take some quirky directions, allowing the entire growth process to go further out of hand As the current expected obsolescence period is two years in the field of communication, the 20 year plan period may have to be made five, if the plan is to remain realistic and flexible.

The present plan preparation process is cumbersome and protracted, using archaic governmental tendering systems and manual calculations, often based on unreliable data. State-of-the-art methodologies may reduce this time and a continuously updated data bank would help generate quick responses to changes in the city. In other words, the instruments created for planning and implementation need to become watchdog agencies with greater flexibility to face the future.

Premise 8 – *The reservation of a certain percentage of housing stock for the economically weaker sections ensures equity in the development process.* Housing is the largest land-use category in any city taking up around 40-60% of the land. Qualitatively, it is also the most significant aspect of a city as it addresses the well-being of the family, the foundation of a healthy society. Yet the performance of our urban planning system is pathetic when it comes to housing. About 40% of the population of every Indian city lives in slums Ironically, this is more true of those metropolitan cities where strict master plan implementation has been effected. In addition to a lack of physical infrastructure, the main official indicator of a slum, the virtual absence of social infrastructure and the resultant criminalisation of settlement management systems make them among the worst in the world.

At the same time, large parcels of land are reserved in our cities for mega district centres and other resource hogging facilities in order give the master plans a semblance of legality and credibility. While the relevance of these large concentrations of speculative building bulk are matter for a separate discussion, the class bias and the absence of public accountability of the planning systems is a gaping hole in the mess that is housing.

Premise 9 – *Providing water and electricity is not the physical planner's business and it suffices for the plan to project the requirements based on extrapolation of past demands.* Infrastructure provisions in terms of water supply, electricity and sewage and solid waste disposal are areas where all Indian cities, without exception, are in deep crises. The source of power and water are taken for granted in most plans. For example, the Delhi Master Plan – a model for many other master plans in the country – contains only a small paragraph pertaining to water supply and disposes the problem of power for the city as it expects it to come from the controversial Tehri Dam!

Urban development has systematically eroded traditional water systems, while mindlessly polluting rivers and lakes by sewage and industrial waste disposal. No provision for energy is contained in urban development plans as decisions regarding location and bulk of buildings and other energy intensive activities are neither planned nor regulated in consonance with the availability of energy. Systems of collection and disposal of solid wastes are on equally fragile ground. Only after the recent outbreak of plague did planners begin to take note of the problem of garbage. The master plan conveniently assumes

that these are non-issues for urban development.

Premise 10 – *Urban anthropological issues are not important in a physical plan and qualitative and class characteristics of people can be reduced to numbers.* As discussed earlier, urban development plans assume that humen beings can be reduced to numbers and no differentiation is required with regard to the *nature* of people. Once converted to data, people become the basis on which decisions regarding investment-intensive elements are manipulated. The result is a growth of crime in high density areas, and patterns of riots that correspond to the physical development of a city. Crime syndicates function from large anonymous slum settlements, while the capital investments in crime remain in high income areas. The recent riots in Bombay have revealed interlinkages between the morphology of the city and patterns of riots.

The same is true of health, both physical and social, as our current system of planning has no serious inputs from the field of urban anthropology. The planning of education similarly excludes any sociological inputs. It is fashionable to feed the entire survey into the computer to arrive at complex models. While it is important that state-of-the art technologies be introduced into our planning systems and education, we must not forget that the plan has to serve living, working individuals and communities. In fact, it is necessary to increase urban anthropological inputs into planning as technology is upgraded.

Premise 11 – *Nature as a category has no place in an urban development plan.* The categories used in identifying green and other natural areas is another case in point. Natural, ecologically significant areas like rivers, ridges, wetlands and rock outcrops are classified as 'developable land', 'development area', 'open space', and other such ambiguous terms which are subject to interpretation in the zonal development plans as sports complexes, 'recreation areas' golf courses and so on. Of course, to make the project economically viable it is legitimate to speculate part of this land for other categories of use, like commercial complexes, speculative housing, five star hotels, convention centres, among others.

The proposals being mooted for the training of the Yamuna and conversion of its ecologically sensitive river banks to urbanisable land is a case in point. The Delhi Master Plan conveniently leaves this area blank (without any colour code) and cleverly classifies it as 'developable land'. Many Indian cities originally founded on river banks or suitable valleys within tributaries, today have large sewage drains in place of the original rivers. In most cases the catchment areas of these natural drainage systems have been brought under senseless development, ruining their water sources forever. Instead, city sewage systems and industrial effluents are connected to them. The havoc that is caused in many metropolitan cities by waterlogging and choking of sewage lines is also the result of the callous treatment water systems have received from planners. Pre-industrial settlements were generally located on mounds or slopes to enable surface drainage; in their eagerness to expand, such topographical features have been overlooked in contemporary planning.

A new trend in Indian cities is to invade waterfronts. In many metropolitan cities, lakes, backwater fronts, seasides and riverbanks located in the proximity of city centres are seen as 'soft areas' where large-scale land reclamation proposals are afoot, often with the aid of eager foreign funding agencies, who in turn claim their pound of flesh in the form of commercial spaces. Bhopal is an exception, while Bombay, Cochin, Delhi and many other smaller towns have the greedy eyes of developers fixed on their waterfronts. Immediate legislation and a people's movement to protect these natural areas as public assets can still save them from ruinous development programmes. The civility of a civic authority lies in its approach to highly vulnerable categories – natural and man-made heritage – and their interface with the city, assuming that democracy can ensure equity.

Premise 12 – *The most viable direction of economic improvement possible in urban development is through the introduction of industrial activity, irrespective of the nature and historicity of the settlement.* Purple is the colour code that represents industry in the accepted master plan. Since the history of contemporary urbanisation runs parallel to the history of industrialisation it has provided the logical base to urban planning. A world-view that sees industrialisation as the march towards progress informs every plan, yet no serious exercise based on the study of industrialism is undertaken for the preparation of urban development plans. An arbitrary purple blob, representing industry is planted in every town, irrespective of its historicity, cultural importance, population characteristics and other growth potential.

Premise 13 – *The economic propensity of a settlement is related to its direct role in an immediate physical region.* In the last two decades, regional planning has become an important specialisation in urban development. The last two five year plans also emphasised the importance of 'The Region'. For instance, the idea of the National Capital Region (NCR), born in 1973 but yet to take off as a full-fledged programme, brings into its fold 14 different towns around Delhi to spread urban growth evenly in the region. There are many reasons for this but what is interesting to note here is the impact of the new economic policy on the NCR. By this logic, new investment pressure will be in areas where cost recovery is fast and easy. Thus money flow will direct itself to areas which are already developed.

Balanced regional development is one of the goals of national planning as are the concepts of decentralisation and equitable development. In the new economic policy, large investments will move to the metropolises, as in the urban transport and other infrastructure sectors or into areas of high natural resource availability. In any case, balanced

regional growth is not a priority in a liberalised market economy.

The point here, as in the case of settlement planning and design, is that the flow of investments will not coincide with the priorities inherent in the Directive Principles of the Constitution. There is an urgent need to redefine the role of regional planning if India is not to be further reduced to a set of master settlements and servant settlements. In other words, we need now a new urban development policy which addresses the new economic realities in the light of the Indian Constitution.

Premise 14– *Inviting objections to a draft plan through publication is an effective method to ensure public participation.* There are two ways in which public participation is to be ensured in the master plan process. First, a draft plan is prepared and advertisements placed in newspapers inviting citizens to see the draft plan, raise objections or offer suggestions. Second, after the objections are 'considered', the plan is finally approved by an elected body before it becomes a legal document. This is supposed to ensure an indirect, democratically processed participation.

However, this is a convoluted system and excludes the direct participation of people who are immediately affected by the plans. Most people are unable to understand the technicality and jargon in the master plan and unable to react even if they make the effort to access a copy of the draft plan. Local level decisions which will directly affect the lives of people are also unclear at this stage. The authority is not obliged to abide by all the suggestions and objections (rightly so) and the plan is passed and becomes a legal and binding entity.

The participation of the people in such a system is remote and ends up being a mere formality. Once the new economic policy comes into full play in matters of urban development, large investments and the consequent large scale developments will arrive at our doorstep almost before we know it. The merits and demerits of the scheme will be judged from a macro perspective and local issues are likely to take a back seat. Who will then protect the public, or even the semi-private realm of an urban community? What mechanisms exist to ensure protection of local interests? Is the master plan equipped to provide meaningful intervention at local level?

A panchayati raj model of decision-making needs to be evolved to ensure that local issues remain in people's control. Decentralising the building sanction process can also help. Serious thought has to be given to the problem of public participation in urban development both in its conception and implementation.

Premise 15 – *A two dimensional land-use plan is an effective tool to control urban growth.* The drawing accompanying a master plan is usually a colour printed land-use map showing different categories identified in the plan, the extent of area and the proposed movement structure. In a sweeping abstraction, the city is reduced to these two dimensional plans as part of a document legally binding for the next 20 years. Subsequently, 'zonal development' plans are prepared, once again in two dimension, which decide the height of buildings, specific movement networks and the over-all built form. These two dimensional exercises are then bound by building bye-laws, which are formulated to control built forms in all cities in the state. The result is a voluminous document with many appendages and a complicated set of rules and regulations that leaves everyone confused.

Haphazard growth, a lack of legibility in the city structure, imbalances of growth and traffic that characterise every Indian city are a result of a planning process which treats the built form and spaces as by-products and activity in public spaces as land-use. The city in its three dimensional form consists of form, space and activity, and should be the most important factor guiding our daily interaction with it.

Urban design, the subject that deals with the wholeness of the city, has been taught for the past 25 years and produced scores of trained professionals. Yet the two dimensional planning mind-set is so deeply entrenched in our agencies that they have effectively kept out all other professionals from the field of urban development. Nor has the government seriously studied the problems of the two dimensional approach, so that a separate niche can be carved out for the urban designer who can make a qualitative difference to the way of experiencing a city.

The most celebrated example of the application of this mode of seeing the city is the voluminous 1988 report of the National Commission on Urbanisation. The categories identified by it remain basically the same as in the master plan mode, which in the first place necessitated the setting up of such a commission. What seems to have escaped it is that a value frame is inherent in categories, and to that extent a planning exercise will always remain within the confines of the categories adopted to effect change. Happily, the report of the commission never went beyond the Planning Commission, even though many of its catchy acronyms (GEMs for Generators of Economic Momentum and SPURs for Spatial Priority Urbanisation Regions) became buzzwords for the conservative planner. Many a seminar was held, much newsprint wasted while the Indian city languished.

Take, for instance, the three categories of settlements identified in our planning process: large, medium and small towns. This categorisation, based on population, betrays the obsession with numbers that has plagued Indian planning for the last 50 years. Thus ancient settlements like Banaras, Bhuvaneshwar, Kanchipuram and Ajmer fall under the small and medium town category, along with new industrial or other small market towns, whereas traditionally they have been great centres of learning, art and craft, music, philosophy and architecture. The planner sees them through the same window, based on size and has a single prescription for their ills: the local municipality should acquire land around

the settlement and suburbanise and simultaneously expand the industrial base.

The state planning units, (urban planning is a state subject in India) have a unified set of bye-laws for controlling growth in an entire state, which is the same for the 1000 years old city and the new town, the old areas in a city and its corporate city centre. By this method, we may soon irrevocably erode the traditional Indian settlements, the very source of our indigenous urbanism. In the process of the past 50 years of such 'planned' urbanisa-tion the damage suffered by urban heritage is only second to that suffered by our natural heritage.

This decade has seen the end of the Cold War, the symbolic coming down of the Berlin Wall and the most aggressive incursions of capital into inert developing economies. The government has suddenly discovered that it can no longer sustain the Nehruvian development model. Corruption, gross mismanagement, incompetence, absence of accountability are all set to be wiped clean in one fell sweep with foreign capital. Urban planners have redefined 'resource' as 'commodity'. Clean, safe drinking water – that minimum mandate of any civilized government – is already available to its citizens in plastic bottles for a price. Not merely the price of the contents but even the price of giving up control over drinking water to foreign capital, backed by culturally differentiated, manipulative advertising strategies that visually pollute the built environment. Rightfully, all bottled water should be available to citizens through municipal taps in their homes and public places.

On the one hand are the urbanisation policies that systematically degrade the basic sources of water and on the other is the wanton promotion of its marketing. This attitude is symptomatic of what will happen in other areas of urban development under the new economic order. Rumblings can be heard in the energy sector, and the next war will be waged for control over energy. These two fundamental resources may soon be followed by land, already a hot commodity.

The communications revolution and its impact on urbanisation is another area which requires immediate attention. The information highway and globalisation of unchecked information flow will render many political boundaries useless. Global suburbs, hooked on to the information highway, ecologically sustainable within themselves for infrastructure resources, and operating globally for employment, are already being set up all over the world, including India. Fibre optic technology is being applied to city cores rendering the host areas far more efficient (and therefore expensive), in an otherwise fast deteriorating physical environment. Crime is on the rise, as are exclusion and control.

Pockets within cities might thus get isolated as controlled, globally linked and turned into exclusive precincts available only to those who can afford them. The scenario would then generate servant areas that service the master, or served, areas. The fibre optic wired city cores and their peripheries will be their counterparts in the existing city. A new kind of dichotomy might be in the offing, a new global class/caste structure, first in the cities, from where it will spread through the land.

If the transformation of settlement patterns from the feudal era to industrialised democracy was drastic, the changes that we can anticipate in the electronic era may be catastrophic. Current urban concentrations may disappear, transport needs will transform the morphology of settlements from within, and change the concepts of distance and time. In fact, one can safely predict that changes in transportation technologies will be the single most important factor changing city forms. This is likely to be the sector into which global monetary surpluses will flow first. Finally, we may have a neo-feudal, political system in the hands of energy, information, and water control corporations. What pattern of urbanisation will India have then? What will be the future contours of 'Indian culture'?

A home of one's own

MALA KAPUR SHANKARDASS

CITIES, where almost one half of the world's population lives today, play a significant role in development. This concern formed the background for the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (commonly known as Habitat II and called the 'City Summit' by UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali) held in June 1996 at Istanbul.

The significance of cities as centres for social and economic development is dependent on factors related to its management. The linkages between what goes on in cities and broader development objectives is pertinent, especially as one third of the world's urban population lives in sub-standard housing and inadequate conditions, often under health and life-threatening situations. With limited means for production and financing of housing and urban infrastructure available in developing countries, city dwellers experience many obstacles to meet their basic needs. In addition to inadequate housing and declining infrastructure in most developing countries, generally with no access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, there is no guarantee for security of tenure, access to land or to credit and protection from arbitrary eviction. Ensuring and enabling inhabitants access to shelter is imperative for cities in the UN Global Strategy for Shelter For All by 2000.

Within the global context and based on the author's research on development factors, this article will briefly analyse the emerging paradigms on issues related to land resources needed for housing action in Indian cities. The objective is to present the scope of interventions by reviewing some policies and approaches articulated in the last two decades for land and shelter management which support, rather than restrict, cities in development.

Research on urban area shelter issues suggests that such issues should not be isolated from the development process in cities as a whole. Many such problems are intrinsically linked with aspects of urbanization and industrialization, as cities contain the bulk of a nation's commerce, retail, manufacturing, processing, construction, recreation, entertainment, education, administration and service industries. An observation common to urban analysts is that cities with better economies attract a larger influx of migrants. Also, that there is heavy concentration of slums where major employment centres are located. Socio-economic aspects invariably outweigh other considerations in slum location/formation. For instance, some recent studies on slums in Delhi (Sridharan, 1995), Bombay (Christopher, 1992), and Calcutta (Jagannathan and Halder, 1990), show that along with a heavy concentration of slums in the metros, within the metros too, employment centres attract slum concentrations. These expanding complexes of *chawls*, *bustees*, *zopadpattis* and shanty-towns compel city dwellers to live with inadequate civic amenities and shelter.

As part of the UN Global Strategy for Shelter, there is a conviction that given access to secure tenure, a high level of adequate shelter consolidation in cities can be achieved over time. In its attempts to ensure an improved and sustainable environment for all city dwellers, the Indian government, like others worldwide, is increasingly orienting its effort towards greater access to shelter and land. However, shelter and supply of land through the formal market system

is beyond the reach of a majority of the urban population and a large proportion of those who live in slum and squatter settlements. For such people, informal supply systems have performed far better than the legal supply systems and that too, within the confines of legitimacy. To illustrate this, I refer to the '60s when the Supreme Court made the government responsible for providing housing to squatters (Slum Clearance Act Schedule), reiterating that 'if the Government cannot provide pucca houses to the people, they have the liberty to live wherever they can and in whatever way they can' (Sridharan, 1995).

The issue of slum clearance and provision of shelter for dwellers is critical in city management planning, particularly when national statistical data indicates a faster pace of growth of slums than the total urban population. For example, in Delhi (for which census data exists simultaneously for the total population and for slum population at the same point of time) while the total urban population has increased almost six times from 1951 to 1991, the number of slums in the city increased by a little over 20 times during the same period.

More recently the National Commission on Urbanisation (NCU), set up during the seventh five year plan, looked into the issue of supply of land as an aspect of the urban housing problem. In the interest of slum dwellers, the NCU recommends regularisation of slum/squatter and unauthorized colonies, particularly those around work sites and on land earmarked as residential area in the master plan. The NCU recognizes squatting on public land as the people's effort to provide shelter for themselves in view of the state's inability to do so (Bhatnagar, 1996). Nonetheless, it recommends that land required for public and social purposes must be protected and wherever slums exist on land which is environmentally or ecologically sensitive there would be no alternative but to relocate them.

The commission aims at increasing the supply of serviced land and low cost shelter, improving and upgrading slums along with conserving the existing stock. It calls for state intervention to provide equitable access to land along with changes in the urban land tenure system to ensure security of tenure. With stress on provisions for anticipated future land requirements and bringing increasing quantities of land to the market, the NCU recommends drastic amendments of the Land Acquisition Act as well as of the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act, 1976 and its supplementation by taxation measures that would discourage land owners from keeping land vacant and to encourage proper utilization. It urges the modifications of all laws which inhibit or restrict the recycling of land.

An important proposals of the NCU is to restructure public agencies in the housing sector to enable them to fulfil their new role as facilitators rather than providers of housing. The strategies advocated by the NCU in tackling critical national urban problems are significant, but a review does lead to scepticism about the practicality of solutions recommended for improving accessibility to land and shelter in cities in general, and for the poor in particular. Without a simultaneous emergence of imaginative and helpful policy options, little will be visible of government intervention. Despite a steady urban growth rate since independence, with noticeable fluctuations in the decade 1981-91 and a gradual increase in percentage of the population living in the urban centres over the census data decades, the less than a decade old policy on urbanisation leaves unspelt the linkages which should exist between urban settlement patterns and the country's industrial policy. Further, the new role recommended for public agencies is a late starter input to begin with, considering that till a few years ago, there was no clear-cut policy on housing.

The National Housing Policy introduced in 1988 and approved by Parliament in May 1992, recognises the proliferation of squatter settlements and unauthorised colonies due to an exclusion of the majority from the formal market and their inability to build or legally acquire shelter. The policy enjoins upon the central and state governments to encourage *in situ* upgradation, slum renovation and progressive housing development with conferment of occupancy rights wherever feasible and to undertake selective relocation only for clearance of priority sites in public interest with community involvement.

The policy emphasizes a need to evolve measures for removing legal constraints in provisions of land reform and other relevant acts in conferring homestead rights to occupants and to ensure proper rehabilitation of those uprooted by projects. In other words, the NCP sets objectives with reference to land management with the goal of providing adequate developed land and finance to different income groups. In many ways, it facilitates a planned development of cities and the smooth implementation of urban development strategies. It is significant that the NHP was introduced as India's commitment towards providing 'housing for all' by the year 2000. More importantly, with the formulation of a housing policy the acuteness of the housing problem and the resource constraints come under public scrutiny for the first time. As efforts to overcome some shortcomings which arose in the implementation of the NHP, it was suggested that government incorporate access of the urban poor to institutional finance for home upgradation and for constructing informal houses. We have to accept that informal housing is part and parcel of a large majority of city dwellers. New strategies as a measure for slum development in cities must go beyond demolition, relocation and resettlement.

We must not forget that the basic objective of the NHP is to create an enabling environment for housing activities to assist people secure affordable shelter. Like the NCU, the NHP also envisions the government's role as a facilitator providing access to developed land, building materials, finance and technology. Thus it is necessary to view the contribution of the NCU and the NHP

towards developmental concerns in cities in conjunction with the programmes under the five year plans.

Several programmes under successive five year plans have attempted to provide the minimum basic amenities to people. Accessibility to shelter and land specifically has been part of the last two plans. The seventh plan (1985-90) emphasized the need for a radical reorientation of all policies relating to housing. The eighth plan (1992-97) accepts housing essentially as a private activity, but suggests state intervention in meeting the housing requirements of a majority of vulnerable sections. It upholds the notion of self-sustenance to create enabling environments to accomplish the goal of 'shelter for all'. During this plan period, some new shelter programmes (like schemes for housing and shelter upgradation, footpath dwellers' night shelter, economically weaker sections housing, environmental improvement in urban slums) have been introduced and are being implemented or monitored by the Ministry of Urban Development. The aim of these programmes is development through shelter upgradation. However, the response of implementing agencies (the state governments) to the schemes has not been enthusiastic largely due to the small subsidy components. Since plan allocations have been small, their impact on housing supply has been marginal. Paradoxically, small allocations in many ways restrict the role of public agencies as facilitators for improving accessibility to land and shelter in cities.

Most states have city level development programmes for which special agencies (like Housing Boards, Slum Clearance Boards, City Development Authorities, et al) have been set up. Among others, these agencies are entrusted with the responsibility of housing. In a few large cities municipal corporations, particularly their slum wings, undertake housing projects for targeted sections. However, the total dwelling units constructed by all public agencies put together as a proportion of the total housing, is less than 10 per cent, according to Kundu and Ghosh (1995).

In general, since the poor have limited or no access to formal housing and financial agencies, they resort to various informal (and often illegal) methods of land acquisition and house construction. In a few cities, however, slum dwellers have organised themselves into cooperatives and built shelters for themselves through community effort. Experiences in Hyderabad and other slum clusters in Delhi, (particularly in a slum in south Delhi called Ekta Vihar) show that upgradation through community organisation and people's participation yield good results. The approach and efforts draw attention to the fact that those who lack adequate housing in cities are not a homogeneous group, nor a well-defined class. They vary considerably with regard to occupation and income but tend to merge together when it comes to issues of shelter (Vaidya, 1996). It also puts forth a crucial viewpoint: that issues of land are a resource management problem rather than a structural issue of the urban economy, critically shaped by variables of its location and availability/release of land for construction into the market.

Land market studies show that, on the one hand, Indian cities are unable to divert enough peripheral and agricultural land required for accommodating massive urban growth and, on other, utilize their available urban land efficiently. This reveals a trend towards market orientation on issues of accessibility to land and shelter.

The practice of regularising tenure in informal settlements has led to a substantial increase in illegal land occupations by the poor in cities during the last decade. Though much can be said in favour of regularisation, it cannot be considered a major long-term sustainable solution, since it does not increase land supply but only legitimises it. There is also a fundamental contradiction in accepting regularisation of unauthorized colonies as a solution for improving accessibility to shelter in cities. As Banerjee (1995), in his analysis of the situation points out: 'Families first have to settle illegally in order to be rewarded with legitimacy of occupation'.

This overview reveals only a small aspect of accessibility issues in relation to land and shelter in cities with all its complexities. Improving accessibility defies easy solution within the socio-economic, political planning context. Ad hocism in planning limits the cities' potential to be centres of development. The commitment of the government to make cities GEM (generators of economic momentum), however, will lead to initiatives which will strengthen and give teeth to this commitment. As advocates for 'positiveness' in Indian society, we should work towards strengthening cities as engines of economic growth and generators of income and wealth.

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Tackling Mumbai's slums

SHIRISH B.PATEL

EVERY major public project proposed nowadays in India attracts a knee-jerk reaction of criticism, opposition, hostility. This is because the government is no longer viewed as a body that considers its common citizens' interests paramount when formulating schemes. Schemes are seen as furthering the interests of one wealthy group or another and public interest is paid nothing more than lip service. That said, if we take a dispassionate look at the slum rehabilitation scheme of the Government of Maharashtra (GOM),[1] we find in it a curious mixture of the admirable and the dubious. And the sloppy. In fact, such sloppiness that it questions the seriousness of the entire scheme. Let us examine each of these aspects in turn.

First, the admirable. For the first time in independent India, a government has recognized slum dwellers as contributors to the city's growth and prosperity. In consequence, GOM acknowledges and accepts two important slum-dwellers' rights: the right to ownership of the land on which they live; and the right to water supply and sanitation. They are seen as worthy citizens, deserving of these rights. The motivation for all this may well be the garnering of votes. No harm in that, as long as the motivation persists beyond the immediately forthcoming elections.

Next, the dubious, which is redeemed by a single flash of the admirable. GOM's scheme makes two important assumptions: first, that slum-dwellers cannot afford to finance their own buildings, and second, that they cannot manage their own construction. As we shall see, neither of these two assumptions stands up to scrutiny. But to deal with these two supposed problems, the GOM's solution is a scheme whereby the city's builders and property developers will organise and carry out slum reconstruction. Finance will be provided through a 'free-sale component' of buildable area given to builder-developers to attract them to the scheme. The free-sale floor area is roughly equivalent to the floor area set aside for slum dwellers, which in turn is to be generously provided: 225 sq ft of carpet area per slum household, regardless of size of present accommodation, offered also to pavement dwellers. In a final, gratuitous flourish, all existing slum improvement programmes, even though some have proved successful and are wanted by slum dwellers, are

1. 'Programme for the Rehabilitation of Slum and Hutment Dwellers in Brihan Mumbai', Report of the Study Group chaired by Dinesh K. Afzalpurkar, Government of Maharashtra, 20 July 1995.

to be discontinued on the ground that the new programme will be better. Cancelling existing successful proven popular programmes for no reason seems a clear indicator of fraudulent intentions. Why stop something the beneficiaries want? Unless we are misreading who the real beneficiaries are.

A strangely redeeming feature in the proposal to hand over development to builders and developers flows from one of the Chief Minister's directions to the Study Group that produced the scheme. Organizations and cooperatives of slum dwellers are placed on a 'higher pedestal' than developers and given certain incentives. These include priority in obtaining sanctions, escort services for registration and building permissions, a commercial area enhanced from 5% to 10% and permission to build 25% of the free-sale area on the site first, before commencing work on rehabilitation (whereas builders have to complete the rehab construction before they can avail of the free-sale component).

Finally, the sloppy. There is a long list of undefended assumptions and assertions. Problems either glossed over or overlooked altogether. The most serious flaw is the assumption that there will be enough demand for middle-income housing (the 'free-sale' component) to take up all the additional floor space that is to be built, and that the price for this will be sustained at sufficiently high levels for it to continue to be interesting to builder-developers. The free-sale component works out to a built-up area of 22.5 crore sq ft. For a 5-year programme, if we assume an average apartment size of 500 sq ft, this means 90,000 new middle-income apartments annually (over and above the 1,60,000 apartments annually for slum reconstruction). Compare this with the current construction rate in Mumbai of about 25,000 housing units a year.[2] So we are talking about constructing about ten times as many units per annum as are being constructed presently, and selling to the middle classes about four times as many flats per year as are being sold to them now, without a significant fall in price. Do we call this failure to look at market realities, sloppiness, or dubious practice in suppressing relevant information?

Then there is something which in principle would be admirable, but is turned into its opposite because of sloppiness. This is the notion that housing for the poor should be financed by the better-heeled residents of the city. There is nothing fundamentally wrong in having higher-income housing subsidise lower-income construction. We might argue that it is unwise to provide anyone, including the poor, with housing that is totally free, but since this is peripheral to our argument let that pass. Let us ask ourselves which group of people is going to provide the subsidy.

The GOM's scheme requires slums to be reconstructed on their present sites. The number of huts per hectare varies widely from one slum pocket to another. Some are densely crowded, others relatively sparse. Typically, we find the Floor Space Index (FSI)[3] needed for slum reconstruction ranges from well below 1.0 to almost 2.5. The free-sale component of an equivalent amount is also to be built on the same site. So the total FSI on a particular slum pocket varies, barring a few exceptions, from below 2.0 to 5.0. GOM's scheme requires that FSI of 2.5 first be consumed on the slum plot. The balance, if any, is available as a Transferable Development Rights (TDR)[4] which cannot be used in South Mumbai or in the more prosperous parts of the city: its use is restricted to certain less desirable residential zones in the relatively undeveloped areas between the western and eastern suburbs of Mumbai.

Now who is going to buy the free-sale component of housing built on a slum pocket? Living in the same building, or in an immediately adjoining building, are the original slum dwellers. So it is reasonable to assume that the free sale will be to lower middle-income occupants, the next income category immediately above the slum dwellers. Does it seem fair that the price lower middle-income people pay for their flats should provide the subsidy needed to give free flats to slum dwellers? All those upper-income people in the city who are buying high-cost flats contribute nothing – they are certainly not among those who will purchase the free-sale component in buildings built on slum pockets. So while the notion that the higher-income groups in the city should be the source of funds for slum reconstruction is perfectly acceptable, the way the scheme has been framed, the burden of financing will fall entirely on the not so well-off. This is sloppiness come home to roost: good intentions in theory turning ugly in practice.

Where will the infrastructure for all the new units come from? How is the municipality to cater to the new demand for water supply and sanitation? Slum dwellers at present may be accustomed to making do with a daily *handa* or two of water and open-air sanitation. Once tenements are provided with bathrooms and WCs, the demand for water supply and sewage disposal will substantially increase. This is not to say they should not receive these. Of course they should, whether they are moved into high-rise buildings or left where they are. But how this is to be physically accomplished within the stipulated time frame is an issue that has not been addressed. All that is touched upon is the financing of this infrastructure, which it is assumed can be sufficiently provided by recovering Rs 50 per sq ft of the rehab component from each builder-developer. Nothing is said about financing the infrastructure demand of the new middle-income housing.

We can go on at length about why the scheme in its present form will not work, but this has been done earlier,[5] and

2 'Shelter Needs and Strategies for BMR', Working Paper No 7, Revision of BMRDA Regional Plan.

3. FSI or Floor Space Index, is the ratio of built-up area to plot area

4. TDR is Transferable Development Rights, essentially permission to build the area under the TDR on another plot elsewhere in the suburbs.

5 'Slum Rehabilitation : 40 lakh free lunches?', Shirish B Patel, EPW, 7 October 1995.

the purpose of this article is different. Let us see if we can work out an alternative, workable scheme, starting with the assumption that the GOM's intentions about rehabilitating slum dwellers are genuine. We begin by looking at some of the slums in Mumbai and what they have been able to do with themselves in the past.

The Janata Colony was set up in Chembur in 1949.[6] The site was far beyond the end of the city, without transportation and without civic amenities of any kind, and was probably the first slum resettlement attempted by the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC). The state government notified the land for acquisition in 1951, for the public purpose of resettling slum-dwellers. The BMC charged rent, ranging from Rs 3 to Rs 6 per month per site of about 15 ft x 20 ft. Two municipal markets were also constructed, and by 1976 there were four schools (two run by the BMC), a police station, a municipal office, 6 temples, 5 mosques and 2 churches in what had become a flourishing township of 72,000 residents living in 7,450 huts with common water taps and (inadequate) sanitation. Assured of permanence of tenure (what else was a municipal rent receipt supposed to mean?) many residents had made their huts into more or less pucca structures.

Twenty five years later the Department of Atomic Energy's (DAE) residential complex of tall buildings had grown up on three sides of Janata Colony (the fourth side was the main road). The DAE wanted the Janata Colony moved, no doubt primarily for aesthetic reasons. The Janata Colony's land, once acquired for the public purpose of resettling slum dwellers, was therefore re-acquired for what was described as the still higher public purpose of providing the DAE with recreational and other facilities. Ironically, at that time, of the 72,000 residents who were finally removed, 1,200 were employed in the DAE.

Starting 22 May 1976, over the next two or three days, the Janata Colony was flattened by bulldozers. Its residents were given sites 10 ft x 15 ft (half the size of the sites they had in Janata Colony) in Cheetah Camp, a few miles down the road. Moving them just before the monsoon, without time to settle in or construct anything at the new location, meant that living conditions in Cheetah Camp were horrifying. The site was under the high tide, and a common sight was a charpoy, protected by a plastic sheet above, its wooden legs in the water, stepping blocks of bricks leading to the charpoy, and someone lying on it with the strings and his body an inch or two above the water. There were no civic amenities. Disease was rampant, and several children and old people died in that first monsoon.

You should see Cheetah Camp today. It is a humming township, with everyone living in a *pucca* ground-and-one-upper structures. The land has been filled and there is no longer any question of submergence with the tide. Along the main streets every ground floor space is a glittering shop. The main mosque is at least twice as tall as anything that existed in Janata Colony. There is water supply and sanitation, concessions wrung from the municipality at the time of shifting. It is a prosperous, flourishing settlement, and every incoming flight from the Middle East has at least two residents from Cheetah Camp. Janata Colony was shifted during the Emergency. It is hard to conceive of anyone trying to shift Cheetah Camp today.

The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) has been active for many years in organising slum dwellers and assisting them in slum reconstruction all over Mumbai. In instance after instance from their experience in suburbs in Mumbai we find a confirmation of the same central point: that slum families, usually with the assistance of voluntary organisations, will raise their own funds, manage their own construction and improve their own dwellings over time. The more secure they feel on their sites the greater the improvement.

As we consider each successful slum reconstruction scheme in the past, three features stand out. One is that the urban poor neither need nor expect free housing. With the help of the occasional voluntary organisation, they seem to have managed their own construction process perfectly well in the past. So there is no need to involve builders in the rehabilitation process at all. All that the poor need is land, with security of tenure and basic urban infrastructure. Given these basics, they will find their own funds and, over time, build themselves solidly respectable dwellings. In doing this they seem to be able to sort out among themselves who gets how much space, and while official safeguards are certainly not out of place, there is much to be said for allowing the occupants to decide this among themselves. There is no need to impose a uniform size of hut regardless of how long the occupant has been in Mumbai, and whether he already occupies a solid hut or lives under a plastic sheet on a footpath. Among all past slum projects, Cheetah Camp is perhaps the best demonstration of hope and determination winning out against what seemed impossible odds. The poor will also find the money to pay for their own services. There is no need to subsidise them. Except in regard to the cost of the land, which is absurdly high in Mumbai if it is free of encroachments, and worthless if already squatted upon.

The second feature that stands out is that often conditions in or around slum areas are degrading and filthy. But a careful reappraisal shows that the areas within and between each house are clean and well kept: the filth arises from the absence of sewage connections, and no conservancy. There is nothing individuals, either alone or collectively, can do about either of those things in a large city: they have to be dealt with by the city authorities.

And the third feature, found in all past slum reconstruction experience, is the official hostility encountered at every

6 'Resettling a Squatter Settlement', S.G. Deshpande, EPW, 3 April 1976 , 'Awaiting Eviction', S G Deshpande, EPW, 17 April 1976 ; 'Moving to Cheetah Camp', S.G Deshpande, EPW, 22 May 1976.

step of the way. This is not surprising, given our caste loyalties and the general consensus that those below us must be kept firmly in their place. But it is rarely acknowledged. It is important to recognize that this attitude exists, as well as how pervasive it is, so that we take care to see that any scheme we launch addresses this problem seriously and adequately.

If slum rehabilitation is to work, the first step must be the transfer of ownership of land to the occupants, or if not ownership, at least some measure of long-term security of tenure. Happily, apart from the single instance of Janata Colony and Cheetah Camp during the Emergency, we have not had in Mumbai a situation where people once officially settled in a particular location, have then had their property destroyed and been forcibly removed somewhere else. Certainly we have never experienced in recent years anything as horrifying as the forcible eviction in Delhi of the legal occupants of the land and buildings in Ashok Nagar of Chilla,[7] and the take-over of the same land by a wealthier and more powerful group of people. So we can presume that in Mumbai at least, once land is legally transferred to the slum residents, that legality will be respected.

The GOM's present scheme recognizes that transfer of property presently owned by the central government, or the BMC, or the Port Trust, or Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA), or even the state government, to slum residents even in the form of 30-year leases will be difficult (renewal of such leases every 30 years thereafter is contingent on the occupants behaving themselves). Each of these agencies will have to be persuaded to enter into such a lease. They are required to do this only after slum reconstruction is complete. In other words, a legal lease to the land is brought into effect only after slum reconstruction is complete.

This straightaway makes nonsense of the suggestion that slum-dwellers' organisations and cooperatives are to be preferred to builder-developers in sanctioning schemes. Without ownership of land and the possibility of mortgaging it, no slum-dwellers' cooperative will be able to secure any kind of loan finance. In any case, if the GOM is serious about rehabilitating slum-dwellers, why not begin with long-term leases of the land to them? This would certainly put them in a better bargaining position with respect to prospective builder-developers. And it is most likely that the slum dwellers will want to have nothing to do with them, and would prefer to manage their own construction themselves. So the first step in our alternative scheme of slum rehabilitation is to start, not end, with long-term leases of the land to the slum dwellers' cooperatives.

Next, why would slum-dwellers want an FSI of 2.5 on their land? Exploiting this FSI would push them into multi-storeyed construction, often with lifts and their attendant significant maintenance costs. Most of them, if offered a choice, would prefer the Cheetah Camp type of development, of ground-and-one-upper construction, with freedom to use or let the ground floor to a shop or cottage industry. The total overall FSI would be much under 2.0, probably close to 1.5. It makes for a more pleasant and attractive development for people living in very small built-up spaces.

So the next feature of our alternative scheme would be permission to plan reconstruction with ground-and-one-upper construction, possibly with the ground floor given an added height of 14 ft to make possible an extra loft, plus permission to use the ground floor for commercial activities. In any case, the artificial division of areas into 'residential' and 'commercial' is a notion drawn from western ideas of urban planning – Indian cities in the past never made such distinctions. Once restrictions on the use of the ground floor for production purposes are removed, we can then look forward to many more flourishing equivalents of Cheetah Camp, vigorous, dynamic and significant contributors to the city's economy.

Finally, how does the municipality finance the water supply and sewerage schemes that will need to be put in to service the slum areas? The principle is there, already accepted in the GOM's present scheme: have the city's richer residents provide the finance. We need not here go into the various ways in which funds could be raised. There has been a notorious lack of imagination in the past in regard to municipal financing, a reluctance to confront the city's employers and wealthier inhabitants with taxes that would realistically finance infrastructure.

So we have covered the principal features of a genuine scheme to rehabilitate slum-dwellers: give them the land on which they presently stand, so that they have a legal status on it; allow them to build ground-and-one-upper structures with freely permitted use of the ground floor for commercial purposes; provide them with infrastructure; and finance that infrastructure by a mechanism that places the burden of financing chiefly either on the city's employers or on its wealthier citizens.

What are we suggesting that is different from the GOM's present scheme? First, that ownership of land be transferred to slum-dwellers as the first step in the process, not the last. Second, that slum-dwellers should pay for their own construction and services, not get these free. Paying for their construction is no longer a burden on the lower middle class. And as a result, builders do not have to be necessarily involved: it is up to the slum-dwellers to decide how best to manage and finance their construction. Many of them may well decide to go ahead on their own, with support from voluntary agencies particularly to help mediate between them and the authorities. Third, that instead of enforced high-rise construction, slum dwellers be permitted to build ground-and one-upper with commercial use of the ground floor freely permitted. This will be a lower total volume of construction than GOM's present scheme; and just as effective for securing

7. 'Building from Above, Displacing from Below – Land Development in Delhi', Mukul, EPW, 3 February 1996

financing. And fourth, that the financing and providing of municipal infrastructure be more carefully and thoroughly worked out. The major departures from the present GOM's scheme would be in having slum dwellers pay for their construction, rather than obtaining it absolutely free, and in eliminating TDRs and the need for builder-developer involvement. In all other respects what is suggested here is in principle no different from GOM' scheme.

One question remains. How does one cope with the tremendous resistance encountered at all levels of the bureaucracy to any scheme to help the urban poor?

To this there is no easy answer. We need a deep and sustained political commitment to the success of such an undertaking. Without this, nothing can be effectively achieved. Success will depend in large measure on a campaign aimed at educating the general population, no less than the bureaucracy, about the desirability of what is being attempted. This can only be done with strong political backing and intervention.

Second, the rehabilitation has to be run like a construction project, by a project manager and not by yet another government department or authority. It needs to be driven through in the way the Konkan Railway project has – by placing a person in charge who is there from beginning to end, and whose career is on the line as far as that project is concerned. Running a project – and finishing that project – is quite different from running a department. The Konkan Railway would be still a fraction of the way along, and nowhere near completion and far higher in cost, had it been left to a department or division of the Railways with officers regularly transferred to and fro. The same applies to any other project, including slum rehabilitation. Unfortunately, given Indian Administrative Service (IAS) traditions, there is little hope that the new Slum Development Authority will operate any differently from other government departments, with its routinely revolving chief and other officers, and consequently unmeasurable individual performances.

On the religious imagination of the city

SMRITI SRINIVAS

THIS article is a daytime reverie about a seminar that I coordinated on 'Religious Imagination and Practices in the City' last winter.[1] It was an attempt to fill what my work on the cult of Shirdi Sai Baba in Bangalore had revealed as a serious lacuna in urban studies in India: the understanding of religious traditions and religiosity in the context of the city.

On the one hand, academic discourse has been preoccupied, especially in recent years, with communal identities. On the other hand, studies on urbanisation in India have concerned themselves with the demographic and ecological parameters of Indian cities, the contrast between traditional or medieval and modern cities, family structure and caste in the new dispensation, and so on. Although many of these studies emerged as late as the 1970s, their themes were linked discursively to developments before the 1930s – the influence of the Chicago school and British urban sociology being most apparent here. Historical hindsight allows us to see that even in the heydays of urban sociology in the 1930s and 40s, and afterwards, when the city became increasingly the preserve of urban geographers and planners for whom it was a managerial issue (and their tools increasingly positivist), the city and the urban context were visualised largely as empirical facts characterised by greater population

1. This seminar, held on the 18th and 19th of December, 1995 at the Institute for Social and Economic Change, was supported by the Max Mueller Bhavan at Bangalore.

density, size, a product of technological progress.

But what about the myriad forms and practices which we witness in any urban context and which seem to accompany and itensify with the process of urbanisation rather than wither away with it? Not all of these lead to communalised group formations. I asked myself and others at the seminar if we could take the arguments about religious institutions and traditions in urban contexts further than previous works had done.[2]

It appears to me that a more complex palimpsest is necessary to understand the religious imagination of the city. The issue cannot be plotted on a two-dimensional axis of 'religion' and 'the city', religion being seen merely as as a variable of group identity. A number of papers at the seminar pointed out that transformations in contemporary urban locations, with the growing mobility of persons and resources, have led to a heightened sense of affirmation of religious sites for different communities.[3]

Thus, not only does the festival of Our Lady of Health (at St. Mary's Basilica) in the Cantonment area of Bangalore attract believers from all over the city as well as surrounding towns on an unprecedented scale, but for the period of the festival, all roads lead to the church. In fact, terminal points of many bus routes are named after key shrines, and places of worship, along with the City Railway Station or the Corporation Office, are key markers of orientation in the city. The bus or autorickshaw that one travels in itself partakes of the essence of holy places both within and without the city, and in Bangalore, the most common stickers and icons that grace vehicles are those of the Infant Jesus, Our Lady of Health, Tirupati Venkateshwara and Shirdi Sai Baba.

The city in India or South Asia does not appear to me as an empirical fact, nor patterned on the model of the Greek polis or the modern European city. A preoccupation with such models has led to most writing on the city in India as being in the nature of an apology or a possible economic utopia. We have, instead, to look at the ways in which the symbolic is spatialised, and explore the psyche of city-dwellers as a new and radical terrain.

For this conceptual break to occur, we will have to take a walking tour, like the night peregrinations of Sherlock Holmes, through the city. Only unlike Holmes, who appears as a somewhat disembodied and eccentric mind for whom seeing and reporting involve distance and objective commentary, we will have to inhale the city's smog and smells, feel its various icons – shrines, buildings, trains, parks, cinemas, factories and markets – enclose and enter our bodies and minds. These forms constitute a location, certainly, in which all kinds crimes (whether of the state or its citizens) occur. It is no accident that some of the greatest of detective fiction chooses the city as its locale. Raymond Williams writes in *The Country and the City* that the same industrial processes that gave birth to the city, the census and other forms of classification also gave birth to the detective novel.

However, the city in South Asia is not only a product of the classificatory grids of colonial rule or the power of Western political economy and this, perhaps, is one of the reasons that the detective story in India is such a rare form. A detective story set here might instead be part of a carnivalised genre in which the mystery occurs not in a middle-class drawing room but in the fairs and festivals of local cults. During the festival of the Infant Jesus in Bangalore, a lower class settlement of the city is rescued from civic anonymity for a week in January when pilgrims from all over the city dot transport systems and roads by their saffron and white garb. A market springs up around the environs of the shrine with balloon sellers, ice-candy men, and those selling lockets, icons and calendars, setting up stalls by the wayside. A subculture of livelihoods magically appears where the market and the festival are not separate domains. After this festival is over, the show moves on to the next church, or temple festival or the *urs* of a Muslim saint. For the average believer and the itinerant peddler, the calendar is not a simple progression of dates or 'empty time', but one entailing heavy emotional and economic investment – in flowers, clothes, candles, icons – all of which are the very image of one's prayers. Things are thoughts.

In the 16th century, Bangalore was 'founded' by Kempe Gowda by building four towers to mark out its domains in a classical quadrilateral pattern. By the 19th century, the city had long burst these limits in two directions. In one, stood the fort and market area which belonged to the rulers of Mysore, leading from which now exists the Mysore Road, a national highway along which are dotted various industries. The ramparts of the fort of Tipu Sultan today weave in between the Victorial General Hospital near the City Market. A little further down the road

2. Many sociologists studying urban religious behaviour in India have struggled with the issue of rural-urban continuities as well as the interaction of supralocal institutions with the urban milieu Pocock, in an earlier paper, suggested that the distinction between urban and rural sociologies is superfluous ('Sociologies. Urban and Rural', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*.IV, 1960), a perspective adopted by Rowe ('Caste, Kinship, and Association in Urban India', Aidan Southall (ed.) *Urban Anthropology*, 1973) in his study located in Bombay and Bangalore. Others, such as Singer (*When a Great Tradition Modernizes*, 1972), in his study based in Madras city, in effect, deterritorializes the category of the 'urban' by emphasising civilizational processes in South Asia so that the fields of local and non-local forces are difficult to separate. Mines' more recent analysis of the nature of individuality in South India (*Public Faces, Private Voices*, 1994), again based in Madras, conceives of relations within the city and between its inhabitants as essentially one based on 'multiplex' notions of the self, with individuals linked with others in a number of domains – gender, religion, village, caste, occupation, and so on – creating a complex idea of one's self-role. The weight of the argument about the 'urban' location (and the nature of religiosity within it) may, thus, stress either the 'moral density' achieved by a Great Tradition (or caste) within the city, making territory an insignificant determinant, or the dense nature of interpersonal relations which are necessarily a product of the functional specialization of urbanization processes.

3 Alexander Henn ('Heterogenizing Cults in a Homogenizing World: The Worship of Local Gods and Patron Saints in Urban Goa'), Ramesh Ulbyre ('The Speaking God: Semiotics of Power in Muttappan, a Deity of North Malabar') and Jennifer Bayer ('Religious Practices and Urbanisation').

emerging from the fort and the hospital, is the Kalasapalyam area, where there stands a temple dedicated to Draupadi, the polyandrous wife of the heroes of the Mahabharata.

On Buddha Poornima day every year, occurs a fire-walking ceremony and a set of rituals in which Draupadi, born of fire, emerges from it for the brief period of her manifestation for devotees. Across the busy market area where every manner of product – from fruits to lathes – can be obtained, are tombs of numerous Chisti saints and other holy men. In another direction, after the defeat of Tipu Sultan by the British in the last Anglo-Mysore war, emerged the 'Cantonment' in the early 19th century with a set of wide tree-lined avenues intersecting each other at at right angles – South Parade (now Mahatma Gandhi Road), Brigade Road, Cavalry Road (now Kamaraj Road), Commercial Street, and so on – and another market (now called Shivajinagar Market) largely populated by migrants from neighbouring regions.

In this area, the most well-known of shrines is St. Mary's Basilica in the erstwhile 'Blackpally'. From the Cantonment area, leads the Old Madras Road linking the two states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Around a set of similar roads leading from the city – Mysore Road, Bellary Road, Tumkur Road, Hosur Road, Old Madras Road, and so on – have sprung up various suburbs and heavily industrialised tracts. These can be distinguished from older areas (which generally end in the suffix *pete* [market] or *palli* or *halli* [village], unless they were in the Cantonment area and were then called 'towns') by the fact that they are called *nagars*. What kind of a structure gives coherence to the relations between sites such as these that emerge from various historical periods?

As I recall now several presentations from the seminar, I see the city and its imagination emerging as a series of superimposed maps with their own histories, a multi-dimensional *topos* which is the intersection of various planes of manifested time. James Heitzman's paper ('Historical Processes and Religious Institutions in South India') pointed out that four stages underlie urban forms in contemporary South India: (*i*) The period of regional kingdoms (800-1300), when the differentiation associated with urban life appeared within clusters of independent villages; (*ii*) the period of patrimonial polities (1300-1750), when military administration and associated mercantile activity created more compact, central urban cores; (*iii*) the colonial period (1750-1947), with the assimilation of South Asia as a whole into a world system and the concomitant growth of primary cities and a hierarchy of nodes within hinterlands; (*iv*) and the period since independence (1947-1995), when massive state intervention and explosive demographic change created the conditions for intensified impact of market economies.

The third stage really saw the emergence of urbanization organised around the model of a 'star system' which implies a central hub with a concentration of resources and information flows affecting subsidiary nodes of smaller size and power; this is to be contrasted with a 'network' model where resources and information flows are effected by concentrating dense networks of small units while multiplying interactions between them. It is not that the latter model (historically, the South and South-East Asian model) ever disappeared, but that there was an overlay of the two giving thereby a structure which engaged with ideological processes after the colonial period.

So when chariot festivals occur in the streets of Bangalore of newly established cults, whether these be of the Infant Jesus church or the 'Circle' Maramma temple, they mimic older cosmological notions of city organisation in new suburbs which bear no morphic resemblance to old settlements. The former shrine was built in what was known as the 'Rose Garden', an area which till the 1970s, was geographically and culturally peripheral to the growing metropolis of Bangalore.

There are two stories told about the origin of this church. The first, popularised by the church authorities, is reminiscent of images of the Exodus and the Promised Land: At first, in the midst of a marshy tract, stood the 'Tent Church', and prayers and mass were held by the community of the faithful braving the natural elements. While looking for land to build a more concrete structure, the parish priest was instructed by an Anglo-Indian lady to do a nine-day novena to the Infant Jesus of Prague. The novena proved successful, the Bangalore Development Authority allowed the church to acquire the Rose Garden, and the miraculous shrine of Infant Jesus came into being. On the walls of this church are etched the promise of the Infant: 'The more you honour me, the more will I bless you.'

This shrine today has a following in South India rivalled only by the church of Our Lady of Health at Velankinni. In Bangalore, most of its pilgrims are Tamil Christians (both Catholic and Protestant) and Tamil non-Brahmins, clerks, factory workers, teachers and bus drivers among others. Many of these groups emigrated to Bangalore from the Madras Presidency during the British presence in the city from the early 19th century onwards.

The other tale about the origins of the shrine connects the discovery of the miraculous statue of the Infant to an autorickshaw driver. One rainy night, the driver, a resident of Viveknagar where the shrine stands today, was driving home after he dropped his passengers. In the area of the Rose Garden, which in the daytime was used by goatherds to graze their flock, he heard the voice of a child calling out to him. In the midst of darkness, a little boy appeared to him and told him that a wondrous statue was to be found buried in the ground. The vision disappeared, but the auto-driver discovered the icon which today is held to have beneficient powers, especially those of healing.

This latter story, set as it is in an urban landscape, is part of a 'Shepherd's Cycle' of stories about the discovery of miraculous statues which the anthropolo-

gist, Victor Turner, cites for Latin America, as for instance, in the case of the Guadaluape Virgin. In these modern legends, however, as well as in the practices of the shrine, for instance, throwing pepper and salt at the chariot of the Infant as it circumambualtes Viveknagar, ('to ward off the pox'), we have not only elements of a syncretic cult, or the indigenisation of Western belief systems, but a more complex skein of time and space. The IBM mathematician, Benoit Mandelbrot, used the term 'fractal dimension' to explore a concept of time and space which was prior, in a sense, to a two or three-dimensional world. This idea was used to explain the contours of irregular terrains such as coastlines or mountain peaks. I would speculate that a similar fractional dimension underlies the psychic and suburban topos of these new cults, their angularitites and overlaying of cosmologies.[4]

It appears to me, therefore, as echoes from the seminar drift back, that the question about the religious imagination of the city, needs to be posed in rather different methodological terms. I think Shiv Visvanathan's claim ('Religion and the Geddesian Notion of the City') that Patrick Geddes' theory of town-planning was that it was simultaneously a political economy and a cosmology, provides such a formulation. I would invert this, however, and argue that the 'urban' is not only a location, but an analytic category and a 'structure of feeling' within religious traditions and cosmologies. In the articulation of this sensibility, certain 'root paradigms', defined as cultural models, often unconscious, in the minds of active leaders who are carriers of traditions, may be more amenable to the creation of a particular urban community and imagination than others.

As a sort of postscript to my paper at the seminar ('The Brahmin and the Fakir: the Routinization of the Cult of Shirdi Sai Baba in Bangalore City'), I would like to revisit two shrines in the city of Bangalore which are associated with Shirdi Sai Baba and speculate how certain paradigms pass into a community's religious imagination and what strata of the urban landscape this religiosity occupies.[5] But one cannot enforce a linear view of history, like the language of a city gazetteer or a census description, on this imagination. The saint of Shirdi, Sai Baba, was once interrogated by a town magistrate. This dialogue contains his only apparent self-description, but all kinds of incongruities are visible between the language of the *fakir* and his inquisitor:

Commissioner: What is your name?
Baba: They call me Sai Baba.
Commissioner: Your father's name?
Baba: Also Sai Baba.
Commissioner: Creed or religion?
Baba: Kabir.
Commissioner: Caste or race?
Baba: *Parvardigar* (God).
Commissioner: Age, please?
Baba: Lakhs of years.

My narration is, therefore, deliberately speculative, even intellectually innocent, somewhat like the tales told by pilgrims at these shrines, where time and space are obliterated, collapsed, or transmuted, like symbols in a dream.

The patronage of Sai Baba (?-1918) by a middle-class drawn from Brahmin, Bania and Kayastha groups in Maharashtra in the early 20th century, and their regional networks elsewhere after 1947, led to the transformation of Sai Baba's persona from that of an eccentric village fakir to a city guru. His multiple heritage – drawing from Kabir, Maharashtrian Sufism or Vaishnava devotionalism – did not disappear, but was transformed in the centres of the All India Sai Samaj in Madras and Bangalore.

The All India Sai Samaj is a loose network of temples chiefly patronised by Tamil and Kannada-speaking pilgrims in Bangalore though a fraction of Sindhi and Gujarati merchants, most of whom have connections with Bombay, also visit the shrine. In most of these sites, such as the one at Ulsoor in Bangalore, rituals which are performed at Hindu temples obtain, including both Shaivite and Vaishnavite rites. During Baba's life-time at Shirdi, the practice of holding an *urs* along with the Ram Navami festival was begun. In the Ulsoor temple, however, as in the four other temples in Bangalore, the urs is not held and Ram Navami is regarded as the 'birthday' of Baba.

The Ulsoor temple architecturally reflects a certain 'splitting' of Sai Baba's persona. The portion rising above the road contains a white marble statue of Baba seated on a throne with Brahmin priests officiating. Below, a smaller room used for mediatation, contains a picture of Shirdi Baba as he sat in the dilapidated mosque at Shirdi which was his home for 60 long years after his appearance there in 1858. No one knew when Baba was born, and he would sometimes get incensed with rage when questioned about his origins. Once, in 1916, he threw off all his clothes, stood naked before the fire with red eyes and shouted, 'Now see whether I am Hindu or Muslim!' There is also a story that for many years after leaving his Sufi master as well as the Hindu guru, whom he referred to as Venkusa, he wandered from place to place before arriving at Shirdi; in the interim, he is said to have

4. At the seminar, Asiya Siddiqi's paper ('Ayesha's World: The Territory of a Family of Butchers in Nineteenth Century Bombay') focused on how port cities were perceived as 'home' to the steady flow of immigrants in Bombay who brought with them many practices and ideas of their former homes: apart from skilled craftsmen, there was an influx of traders, vendors and service people (some of whom were tribal and nomadic peoples, like the butchers) who came to the city in search of better markets and livelihoods. In the encounter of such communities with official, colonial culture, Siddiqi stated, two simultaneous developments occurred: one deprived Islam of some of its secular, mundane aspects, making it more narrowly 'spiritual', while the other allowed the appropriation of concepts and institutions, which were neither tribal nor Islamic, towards new cultural forms. V Geetha ('Does God Need Such a Big Place?' – The Self Respect Movement as an Instance of Urban Atheism') similarly argued that the urban milieu of Madras city, and the city itself for the Self Respecters, presented a matrix of openness to ideas of creation of a new urban self - rational, free of prejudice and 'modern' The language of the modern polis was a tool in their refashioning of themselves

5. This paper draws from my larger study, 'Cults, Charisma and Modernity: The Constituency of Faith in South India' (Institute for Social and Economic Change, 1995).

en been a soldier in the army of the ani of Jhansi.

The dominant network linking is site to other Shirdi Baba temples in ngalore is ostensibly 'Hindu'. The ajority of the worshippers belong to ch establishments as the Hindustan eronautics Limited, BHEL, MICO, and her industries, work for the Telegraph epartment, or are engaged in govern-ent employment. They reside in new burbs of Bangalore which are periph-al to both the original settlement (which me up after the mid-16th century) as ell as the Cantonment (established after 300). These suburbs are part of post-dependence developments in the city ong with the establishment of numerous search, scientific and industrial venues nd the creation of Bangalore as the apital of the new state of Karnataka. Baba as passed into the worship of these iddle-class pilgrims along with the orship of Rama and Siva and various ousehold gurus. The idea of Baba as uru seems to provide a mode to connect ifferent communities who reside in the ity more than the particularistic signifi-ations associated with a village *sant*.

n fact, this is explicitly acknowledged y B.V. Narasimhaswami, the 'founder' f the All India Sai Samaj in the 1940s. A Smartha Brahmin who accepted Baba s his guru, he points out in his volumi-ous biography of Baba that although hirdi was far away from any political rena, Baba was the living emblem of Hindu-Muslim unity. This mission of uni-fication was linked intrinsically to the ttempt to purify Hinduism of its divisive tendencies – whether these be the reli-gious groupings of Saivites, Vaishnavites or worshippers of different cults. Although Baba did this in the exoteric aspects of his life – for instance, holding all manner of rituals in the mosque – the central aspect of his spiritual message was esoteric. B.V. Narasimhaswami claims that though Baba was an adept of all paths, his chief path was that of *bhakti*, the special form of which is described as *guru marga* (the path of the guru); each devo-tee should continue to adhere to his own faith, while belief in a common guru would lead persons divided by other dif-ferentials to the same spiritual source.

It would appear, at first, that the traces of the fakir are to be found in their absence in Bangalore city. And that the religious imagination of a cult and a city contains zones of cultural amnesia. But there is another small shrine which is unknown to most Hindu middle-class citizens in the Cantonment area of Bangalore city. This is the *dargah* of Pir Syed Hyder Shah Jilani, a Sufi of the Qadirriya order. This shrine was built only after the 1950s when the Pir passed away, and borders the Palace Grounds of Bangalore. This area is now heavily built up and the grounds themselves are occupied by the annual Jumbo Circus and the mango fair. In fact, a visit to the dargah can be accompanied by a visit to the circus and the fair as well. Even forty years ago, it formed a rather lonely tract surrounded by graveyards of Dakkini Muslims and Kutchi Memons. The latter associate themselves closely with the Pir's family which hailed from Kutch.

I discovered recently that the Pir believed that Shirdi Sai Baba was a Sufi of the Qadirriya order, and a close associate of Sai Baba, Tajuddin Baba, was mentioned by the Pir. So, in fact, when I remarked that the pictures and calendars depicting Shirdi Baba in saffron clothes was historically incorrect, one of the pilgrims reminded me that the Pir's mother's family belonged to the Chisti order of Sufism (who wore such a garb) and Sai Baba could well have worn saffron clothes. Historical error may be an insignificant issue in comparison to resonances in the realm of religious imagination.

The connection of the Qadirriya order with Bangalore dates back at least to the time of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan's rule, but appears to have intensified with the setting up of the British Cantonment here. Kutchi Memons came in large numbers to seek their fortune during this period and, with them, members of the Pir's order to provide them spiritual instruction. This role was not totally an apolitical one: The Pir's teacher was also the father of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and during the Khilafat movement, the Ali brothers and Gandhi visited Bangalore and held conversations with the Pir. The Pir supported the Non-Cooperation movement, and the Kutchi Memons largely boycotted British goods in the Cantonment. Today the Memons, as in yesteryear, are the chief retailers in Bangalore's Commercial Street and relatively wealthy compared to their Dakkini brethren who are largely engaged in petty trade and craft; the Memons in Bangalore form about 5% of the total number of Muslims in the city.

The genealogy of the Pir has till date included only those of Memon origin. But when the Pir passed away, about 40 years ago, he nominated a Dakkini Muslim as his spiritual successor. From a small centre that was patronised chiefly by Kutchi Memons, the dargah today attracts Dakkini Muslims from all over the Cantonment area and other parts of the city. The dargah is now linked, for the Muslim believer, to a series of other sites – especially the Chisti dargahs – the clientele of this place expanding beyond its former limits. Many of these dargahs, as said earlier, are located in the older city of Bangalore built around the locus of a fort and a market where Muslims in large numbers have been settled from at least the early 18th century, if not before. Might this be a zone of return of the paradigm of the fakir in the cult of Shirdi Sai Baba which in the other centres has all but gone underground?

The symbols and paradigms of a religious universe may not work in the manner of linear progression but may emerge again and again from the recesses of the imagination of believers and cults to recombine alchemically with other sites and groups in the city. Does the city, then, have a dreamtime, a simultaneity or a telos, which does not lie in historical unfolding? Rupert Sheldrake (in *The New Science of Life*) uses the concept of 'morphogenic fields' to explain simultaneous discoveries in science, its creativity and resonances between structures. Similar processes may well be true of the religious imagination of a city.

Whither urban transport?

RINKI SARKAR

THE rise and proliferation of urban areas in the contemporary world is due to the fact that it is economically beneficial to carry out activities in a spatially concentrated context. Cost advantages accrue from agglomeration economies with the clustering of economic activities arising from the need to share a common resource pool – varying skills, suppliers, banking, credit facilities and freight services; the need for access to a network of buyers and sellers; or simply the important need for face-to-face contact. Large urban conglomerates are thus an obvious outcome of rapid 'modernization' and are viewed as having the potential for generating high levels of income.

In the developing world, these processes have been accentuated by an inherent bias in the pattern of government expenditure, which favours the capital city and the largest cities in the country. Pressurized by resource constraints, the authorities find it safer to concentrate facilities in a few large urban centres as the surest and quickest wa achieving the objectives of 'modern tion'. This decision is implicitly le mized by the overwhelming role pl by primate urban centres in promo the growth of the gross national duct (GDP).

Spatially concentrated econc growth trends have been accompanie equally phenomenal and concentr urban growth, both demographic spatial. A gross geographical imbal in economic opportunities as we accessibility to a host of subsidized vices encourages migration to the ci Complemented by high rates of na increase, this results in an unfore population growth. The city begi expand spatially to accommodate influx. A growing demand for core l tions hikes up land prices and renta the city-centre, pushing residential other functions to non-core locations. indigenous planning expertise in developing world and their colo

nterparts have heightened the pace
netropolitan dispersion, swayed by
stern ideals of order and homogeneity,
ibiting a preference for low density,
awling cities with spatially segregated
d uses and unobtrusively created
ially segregated spaces. Forced spatial
regation is counter-productive to a
h degree of spatial interdependence,
very essence of the functioning of an
an area. All these factors exert an
urmountable pressure on infrastruc-
e facilities and public amenities endan-
cing conditions for peaceful urban
istence.

It is in this problem-laden scenario
t the crisis of urban transport is rooted.
e rapid increase in population speed-
enhances demand for transport infra-
ucture and services making it almost
possible to meet it at adequate levels
service. The spatial spread of the city
ises mobility levels and distances.
dded to this is the over-emphasized
rust on specialized land uses and the
anned scattering of employment centres
ross the urban area. This results in
nfocused travel patterns, involving crazy
gzags of commuting from the suburbs
the centre, counter-commuting from
e centre to the suburbs and from one
uburb to another, all at once.

Such complex patterns of movement
nake it difficult for any public transpor-
ation system to function effectively.
raditional and eco-friendly options like
ycling and walking are virtually impos-
ible given the distances involved. Those
who can afford to, opt for personalized
nodes to overcome these hurdles of intra-
rban travel. The end result is a whole
gamut of motorized and non-motorized
modes scrambling for limited road space,
oblivious of the severe repercussions on
energy use, environmental quality and
safety. The situation is aggravated as the
planning process has been heedless of the
social, economic and environmental
implications in the relationship between
transport and urban life.

Rather than comprehending the
heterogeneous needs for accessibility in
the urban areas, the prime objective so far
has been on how to facilitate mobility
and speed. In fact, most survey techni-
ques involve recording of movement
volumes, mainly of motorized modes,
for devising measures of system perfor-
mance. As a result, resources have been
abundantly used to create a huge transport
infrastructure which supports the use of
personalized modes privileging a minor-
ity, propagating an unfair distribution
of accessibility.

The urban form also breeds inequity in
travel. The high rentals and land values
in the city-centre and the current planning
strategies of dispersed living push the
lower income groups to the periphery.
Consequently, they are forced to travel
longer distances to reach their place of
work, spending hours commuting in
crowded transit vehicles, often changing
several buses along the way. Such a sys-
tem benefits neither the suffering com-
muter nor the state which earns second or
third class fare from them. Besides the
discomfort, strain and the futility of time
spent in commuting, those with lower
incomes are unable to compete fruitfully
in the labour market or take up a second
job which may be an ardent necessity. The
wealthy, on the other hand, are centrally
located and even when living in isolated
peripheral pockets can deal with the prob-
lem of distance more competently.

This inequity operates at the
regional level as well. Here, the focus of
policy making is concentrated in the larger
urban centres with little regard for the
transport problems of those living in small
and medium towns. These less fortunate
small-town dwellers have to take recourse
to intermediate modes of public transport.
While such transport alternatives are
demand-responsive, have adapted effec-
tively to changes in the socio-economic
environment and provide employment,
they cost four to five times more than the
subsidized public transit facilities avail-
able in larger metropolitan centres.

Finally, in third world cities, trans-
port is least user-friendly to women who
have to contend with particularly adverse
travel conditions. Although women have
specialized accessibility requirements,
these are rarely addressed due to poor
gender awareness in planning and devel-
opment issues related to transport.

Insensitivity to such equity issues
is evident if we consider the traditional
ways of evaluating the costs and benefits
of transportation projects. These demon-
strate net benefits in value terms overlook-
ing the distributional impact of such
proposals. It may be worthwhile to stress
that the high degree of inter-dependence
among participants in the urban areas
implies that any public policy interven-
tion is likely to have a substantial impact
on the distribution of well-being. Any
evaluation exercise must, therefore, not
only lay bare the probable redistributional
consequences, it must be sufficiently
interactive and value the feedback from
those who have to deal with the problem
of transport on a day-to-day basis. Unfor-
tunately, the weakly democratized envi-
ronment prevalent in the third world
may make it hard for the majority, who
are captive users of public transport or
forced to rely on walking and cycling, to
raise a political hue and cry about their
requirements.

Various dimensions of the urban
transport crisis may be visualized in
relation to the multiplicity of modes that
operate. A clearly visible trend in all large
cities is the marked increase in personal-
ized vehicles despite the fact that this is
the privilege of a minority. For instance,
during the period between 1978 and 1993,
personalized vehicles constituting cars
and especially two-wheelers, increased
phenomenally in all the major metro-
politan cities. In the case of Calcutta, the
increase was from 1,14,000 to 4,16,000;
for Bombay the figures were 2,00,000 to
5,43,000; for Delhi 3,87,000 to 18,80,000
and for Madras 68,500 to 5,88,000, an
increase of four, three, five and eight
times respectively in each case. While
personalized modes of travel account
for over 85% of the total vehicular popu-
lation, they cater to a mere 9% of the total
person trips, in the cities listed above.

The automobile poses a peculiar
dilemma to policy makers in almost all
countries. On the one hand, car manufac-

turing is seen to be crucial for the economy for it not only provides employment and progressive investment, it also stimulates the growth of ancillary industries. On the other hand, the actual use of the motor car generates a host of negative externalities. High volume and fast speeds make car traffic incompatible with other modes and other urban functions. This is manifested through staggering levels of congestion, toxic gas emissions, unnecessary space consumption and safety violations. Failure of public policy to internalize such high costs of the automobile only means that car-users are being implicitly subsidized at enormous social and environmental cost.

The public transportation system – predominantly the ubiquitous bus, the backbone of the overall transport system serving the majority – is also afflicted by a host of maladies. Transit services are poor and inadequately provided by ill-maintained vehicles. This is largely a consequence of several operative hurdles imposed by adverse public policy and implicit politicization. For instance, pricing in the third world is a political issue. Fare increases have been restrained despite rising input costs, rationalizing the priority of socio-economic over commercial principles. Low fares for all, concessional fares for some and the provision of services on a large number of uneconomic routes have hampered the building up of internal resources, crucial for financing expansion, enhancing the level of service and ensuring proper maintenance of the fleet under rapidly growing demand conditions. Ad hoc subsidy policies have worsened the situation. Despite public resource constraints, subsidies have been perceived as a 'gap-filling' device for covering losses, not being linked to any measure of productivity or performance. This has removed incentives for cost control, breeding poor accountability and gross inefficiency and have resulted in mounting losses and deteriorating levels of service.

Having crippled publicly owned transit companies, a last fugitive bid to rectify the situation was made by encouraging private initiative in service provision. The result is the 'Redline bus syndrome', where the private sector assists in mitigating the excess-demand situation but comes with an invincible package of other problems – undisciplined driving, safety violations, a fight over lucrative routes and preference for peak-hour operations.

Pedestrians and cyclists are the most neglected of all, even though in most cities of the developed world, statistically, walking and cycling continue to account for almost 50% of the total person trips. High motorized usage and the non-existence of pedestrian paths along the roads, makes cycling and walking difficult, circuitous and dangerous. It is not uncommon to find that in developing nations, pedestrians and cyclists are the most jeopardized as far as accident rates go. Records on road traffic fatalities in the case of Delhi indicate that for the year 1994, 54% of those affected were pedestrians and cyclists. It may not seem unreasonable to expect such magnitudes in the case of other metropolitan cities as well.

The buzzword of the urban transport problem in the third world cities today is the 'mass rapid transit system' – over, under, elevated or a combination of all these. While the advantages of high carrying capacity, speed and a technological symbol of modernity are loudly proclaimed, there is a curious silence over the enormous costs which the long gestation period perpetuates and the high social costs resulting from disruption of social life, and the even more persistent need once in operation, for subsidies to ensure sufficient patronage. The cost and time overrun reached unimaginable proportions in the case of Calcutta MRTS. While the project cost increased by 11 times from Rs. 1.4 billion to Rs. 16 billion, the actual completion time took nearly a quarter of a century (1970 to 1995), as compared to the targeted completion period of seven years!

The manifestation of the urban transport crisis in terms of environmental implications poses the most seric threat to the urban community. The pl nomenal growth of automotive traffic cities of the developing world clea indicates that air pollution is likely to the major urban problem of the futu Exposure to hazardous levels of air p lution tends to be higher in those cit where the urban form displays mu denser patterns of living amidst wh vehicles operate. Further, as mo vehicles emit contaminants in clo proximity to the breathing zone people there is a greater health ri A closer look at the environmen issues surrounding urban transp would clearly exhibit the gravity of situation.

To begin with, the construction a operation of transportation syste exacerbates environmental decline. C struction of transport facilities create fugitive dust problem which is aggrava by emissions from construction equ ment and incineration of wastes at construction site. This is of course addition to the traumatic social impac forced relocation affecting the structu function and social pattern of t neighbourhood, especially in clo proximity to the construction site. T construction site itself, given the lo gestation period, acts as a signific physical barrier obstructing movem patterns. In addition, the noise and vib tions at the construction site have de mental effects as well. These fact have specific relevance for long te projects such as the 'mass rapid tran systems'.

The operation of road-bas vehicles emit primary pollutants such carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, volat organic compounds, sulphur dioxi oxides of nitrogen, particulate matte smoke, dust and lead compounds, direc into the atmosphere. Secondary polluta are formed in the atmosphere as a res of reactions such as hydrolysis, oxi zation and photo-chemistry. These se ondary pollutants constitute nitrog dioxide, an entire class of photochemic oxidants (including ozone) and acic

lepositions. While the transport sector in general accounts for the bulk of carbon monoxide emissions, petrol-run engines are primary contributors to carbon monoxide emission levels. Diesel-driven vehicles like lorries and passenger buses emit less carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons and no lead. But diesel engines emit about ten times more particulate matter causing greater problems with noise, odour and visibility. The higher transport share of SOx emissions in developing countries is due to poor fuel quality, extensive use of diesel-powered vehicles for passenger transport and poor vehicle maintenance. Like gasoline engines, diesel vehicle performance and emission levels are very sensitive to proper tuning and maintenance. The inventory of air pollution statistics collected and monitored by various agencies in India, indicates a common trend, that in the case of the major metropolitan cities, nearly 60-70% of the air pollution comes from vehicular emissions alone. The total pollution load generated by the transport sector for Delhi is about 1300 tons per day and in the case of Bombay, 1100 tons per day. What is alarming is that these magnitudes are almost double of the pollution loads recorded five years ago. Studies also indicate that vehicular traffic is the most important source of noise pollution in these cities. The acceptable decibel levels of 50-65 have been surpassed in most cases, while noise levels recorded at major traffic arteries during peak hours have touched 105-117 decibels.

Any number of diseases arise out of these primary and secondary pollutants. Carbon monoxide reacts readily with haemoglobin in the blood to form carboxyhaemoglobin and is harmful to people with severe anaemia, cardiovascular and chronic pulmonary diseases. Photochemical oxidants reduce visibility, cause eye irritation and worsen respiratory problems. Sulphur dioxide when inhaled with particulate matter aggravates the condition of patients suffering from bronchitis. Oxides of nitrogen produce eye and nose irritation. Particulate matter from diesel vehicles can cause cancer. Lead from petrol powered vehicles can have dangerous toxic effects on children. Noise produced by vehicles can disturb sleep, leading to behavioural and physiological changes degrading human health. It may also cause arterial hypertension and increased blood pressure levels in humans.

The complexity of the transport crisis in third world cities today seems apparent amidst conflicting considerations of different social groups with varying needs, the coexistence of motorized and non-motorized modes with differing infrastructure, as well as land use requirements. The lure of employment will continue to attract migrations to the urban centres, with disastrous consequences. Under these circumstances, it is crucial to lay down priorities realistically. A reorientation of the conceptual framework with greater sensitivity to economic, environmental, energy and social, especially equity and gender considerations, seems a vital necessity.

Before embarking on large, high cost projects in a restless bid to solve the urban transport crisis, a 'thumb rule' that must be adopted is to try and devise innovative ways of ensuring optimum use of existing facilities. The emphasis of the policy-makers should be on taming personalized modes of transport, specifically the automobile, while reorganizing street use, favouring the most numerous users, namely, pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transit.

Lastly, what needs to be seriously questioned is the wisdom behind initiating expensive transport modernization schemes rather than encouraging intermediate forms of technology and organization. What seems clear though, is that bureaucrats, consultants, contractors, foreign government export agencies and manufacturers of transport equipment have much to gain from large-scale transport projects. The larger the scale, the greater the gain. Thus, the link between studies, plans and equipment sales does not seem paradoxical.

Interview

William Goldsmith is Director, Program on International Studies in Planning at the Cornell University. He was interviewed by **Rinki Sarkar** on 15 February 1996 in New Delhi.

How did you get involved with urban issues?

I began my work on urban studies with a visit to Puerto Rico where I taught at the university. Since then I've worked in Mexico, Brazil, in a few other places in Latin America, on problems of regional decline, urbanisation, and recently on environmental problems and throughout on problems relating to the poor majority.

The fact that this issue of 'Seminar' is going to deal with 'the other city' appeals to me. I co-authored a book with Edward Blakely about American cities (*Separate Societies: Poverty and Inequality in U.S. Cities*, Temple University, Philadelphia, 1992) which examined the development and growth of the 'other city' or the worsening conditions for those who live there and the compounding of separate tracks of positive and negative development with the issue of racial discrimination.

What are the processes that have led to this 'negative development'?

The first and most basic reason is that one should expect a capitalist market dominated society to produce constant surges of inequality. Once produced, the inequality has to appear somewhere. So the essential consideration

about why things are getting worse for the majority of people, not just in the third world cities but in a substantial minority of people who live in the developed world as well, is that they live in societies whose fundamental rules are generated through a process of capitalist accumulation. These are based in the transfer value from the exploitation of labour which, *ipso facto*, has created inequality. Unless we have public institutions that act so as to minimise the damage done by this, conditions are bound to worsen.

So my underlying assumption is that given the withdrawal of socio-democratic restraints on market behaviour, vastly exacerbated recently in India by its adoption of market regimes initiated either locally or imposed externally by international solutions of market rules: globalisation, privatisation, structural adjustment and the rest, it shouldn't surprise anybody to see worsening conditions among poor masses in Indian cities. Especially, when city growth is aggravated by migration from the countryside which is also stimulated by these market moves and abetted by natural increase. Under these circumstances, even if authorities plan things well, conditions will worsen. Their excuse for inadequate planning is budget constraints. We can see this happen even in the rich cities in America where things have really been getting worse for up to 40% of the population. According to all public authorities, not just left wing critics, statistics on the distribution of income, the delivery of public services, even on housing and public transportation, indicate a deterioration of the situation. In fact, between 1980 and 1990 roughly all the growth in income in the United States is accounted for by increases in incomes of the top 5% of the population.

In your lecture at the School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi you spoke about four considerations fundamental to the analysis of the city. Could you briefly summarize these considerations?

I said that there were four considerations we had to think about for the city. First, the physical: layout of the city, where different classes of people live. Second, the environment – how badly the air and water, as well as other aspects of the environment, are deteriorating. Third, the social city – how well the different social groups communicate with one another, get along, deprive one another. And, fourth, the economy. My intentions were with reference to North American cities but this is applicable to cities throughout the world. It has certainly been true from my experience of Latin American cities.

We are particularly interested in the Latin American context. It would probably be relevant for a better understanding of our problems.

The actual formal development of the city, aided and abetted by the planning authorities, has pushed people, especially the poor, to the distant periphery. This has created separate living and social spheres making it easier for public authorities to disregard the needs of the poor. Thus the rich can ignore the poor more easily because they are physically separated. This, in turn, has led to an ability to damage the environment because those in control can ride in air-conditioned automobiles, ignoring the deteriorating civic conditions. In South American and certain American cities, rich people are protected from crime and violence by fences around their houses, guards at their doors and driven around in protected automobiles. I think this kind of separation is growing. Now, my contention is that the economy has to pay a heavy cost to continue subsidizing what are inappropriate patterns of urban development that reduce accessibility and increase pollution.

Do you think subsidies, widely used in cities all over the world, have had a distorting effect in improving the distribution of services in an urban economy?

My own analyses of subsidies in urban transport in the developed countries and work done by John Pucher, Douglas Lee and other students of urban transport in the rich countries, indicate that most subsidies for urban development, including urban transport, go not to the poor but to the rich.

Indirectly or directly?

Well, indirectly. Let me give you some rough examples. Take tax-expenditure in the U.S.: money that would normally be collected as taxation is taken off the tax rolls through special legislation. For instance, people who purchase homes in the U.S., purchase them over long terms. They usually take out mortgages, don't pay off these mortgages for 30 years but pay through annuities. The annuity is largely interest payments that can be deducted from income prior to the assessment of federal income tax. This means that if the federal tax rate is roughly 30-33%, a third of what you pay every month for your housing is free, that is, it is a tax dodge. In the U.S. this tax dodge is available only to a very small minority of the population. Yet it amounts to 80 billion U.S. dollars each year, more than the sum of almost all public housing subsidies in the country! So the big subsidy goes to the rich not the poor... this is not a semi-direct but an almost direct subsidy for housing.

Again, there are much larger subsidies offered for road building, highway maintenance, policing, traffic control and planning affiliated towards that, a vast proportion of which goes towards the construction of suburbs where the rich live, (in the U.S., poor people live in the centre of the cities). Subsidies amounting to about 200 billion U.S. dollars a year, given for urban development, not only benefit the relatively well to do but, through its effects on the pattern of urbanisation which drives down values in the central city and increases it in the suburbs, it also affect such things as public schools which are paid for entirely out of local governments. The central cities being mired in poverty, are

unable to pay real estate taxes and thus can't support local schools; so their children are badly educated. All this reinforces, by positive feedback, the bad things in the central city and the good things in the suburbs. Now this is also reinforced by racial considerations. Dark-skinned people tend to live in the central cities, while white people tend to live in the suburbs. So there's almost an unending cycle of difference which exacerbates each round.

These subsidies can expand into a third which goes to the schools and then into a fourth which could be maintenance of the urban transportation system. Thus, it becomes impossible to support mass transit systems because insufficient ridership means these are not maintained giving rise to a vicious cycle that drives it down. But there is also a vicious circle which makes the use of private automobiles more desirable.

Unfortunately, public authorities will constantly go broke unless they can either collect higher tolls or be subsidized, which is somewhat of a conundrum. But I will insist that before we question the operations of bus systems, we have to first establish the rules under which we do the analysis. And, if we call *that* a subsidy, then we have to call what's going for automobiles, subsidy as well.

My colleague Douglas Lee, at the Department of Transportation Research Centre in Cambridge, Massachusetts has actually done calculations on the value of streets, theoretically. He observes that if we were to use a cost-benefit analysis, we must price streets and even sidewalks at the value that we can determine say, from urban rent codes. Then we would find that utilization of streets is enormously biased towards well to do people. This means that we are delivering a gigantic subsidy to the rich.

A cost-benefit analysis of bus systems can similarly demonstrate that these are more efficient than subway systems. And those who do will also say that public bus systems tend to be inefficient for overriding reasons. But their subsidies are trivial compared to the subsidies offered to private auto users and probably even to the users of taxi-cabs.

In the introduction to the book, Sao Paulo: Social Struggle and the City, *edited by your Brazilian colleague Lucio Kowarick (N.Y. Monthly Review Press, 1992), you talk about Sao Paulo as the 'City of Industry', the 'City of Misery' and the 'City of Resistance'. When you say the 'City of Resistance', does it ring a bell of hope, that things will change for the better?*

Sao Paulo, a massive tower of industrial creation, is very much like Bombay. If in that development they create the vast misery that we all know they do create, it's important not to stop there and withdraw and give up hope. So I observed in my studies of the city of Sao Paulo (and studies done by others) that the misery created during the process of industrial development, engendered not only hostility and antagonism but formal organised, partly successful resistance as well. This is cause for real optimism.

My Brazilian colleagues observed that in the twenty odd years of military oppression after the 1964 military coup in Brazil, the organising by labour unions and by neighbourhoods was directly and often successfully repressed. The flame on the candle kept burning and eventually caught fire to give rise to a resistance that is largely responsible for toppling the military regime in some very public and dramatic ways. Millions of people dressed in black came out in the streets saying, 'This is our country, we want it back.' A tremendous source of resistance to the repressive regime came out of the city workers and city residents.

One remarkable outcome of this movement was the unity achieved between people who were organised on the basis of territory. They were urban residents with common grievances about bad housing, of police brutality, busy schools, terrible public services, inadequate transportation, all the rest. Interestingly, they were organised in what are called 'base communities' largely by the left wing liberation Catholic Church. And they combined forces with the workers party, labour unions.

Latin American countries are largely urban. 70-75% of the population resides in cities, whereas in India the relevant number is 25% in cities, perhaps even less. So I wouldn't dare to make a comparison. But the Latin American movement makes it is possible to show some optimism although it is difficult to be optimistic today, given the deterioration in security and the living conditions for many of the people of Latin American cities over the last twenty years, and what I think has been the rapacious effect of structural adjustment programmes even in Chile.

Many claim that Chile is a success story. But I'm an agnostic and very sceptical about the claims of improvement. Yes, employment rates may be up and the economy may be moving, exports of fresh fruits and vegetables may be tremendously successful, but I understand from my friends who work in the poor neighbourhoods of Santiago, Chile's largest city, that people who live in these neighbourhoods are not only virtually defeated but extremely poor. Kids get less milk than they used to, bus fares are higher, there is less decent work, housing conditions are worse. We know that there have been outbreaks of cholera which were unheard of before. This is what happens when there is inadequate attention paid to water supply, public health measures, immediate rehydration programmes and so on, which are emergency measures that have been dropped. So my optimism has to be encased in an observation that conditions are really miserable in Latin American cities. I don't have the general health indices but my guess is they are worse.

It would be wrong to say that all we have is fast industrialisation and misery, we also have tremendous political and social organisation going on all the time, which

under repressive conditions is well advised to be quite quiescent, but which will emerge when conditions allow it to. Repression is not an effective way to govern a capitalist economy and there are always pressures to withdraw from it. When that happens, there will be positive social movements from workers' collectives, residents' collectives from environmental movements, women's movements and ethnically based movements. I think we have to simply expect that and find ways to encourage and aid it. I think there are many ways to do it.

But do you also see this permeating into reform in the formal planning process? Will there be a new consciousness on the part of city governments about the deteriorating living conditions in the city, especially the 'other city'?

Good question. I've got to change one of your words. You say 'will there be?' Who knows whether there will or won't be, but there *might* be and there are conditions under which it may happen. Olpadwala and I contend in our paper on 'Sustainability of Privilege' (*World Development* 20(4), 1992, pp 627-640), which is about the urban environment that there are grounds for optimism. Because even the ruling and upper classes are afflicted by declining conditions of the urban environment. It is unpleasant on a daily basis for almost every city-dweller. It is obviously easier for the rich to escape this, but it nevertheless afflicts us. That is one measure for optimism.

Secondly, I contend that the pattern of urbanization that has been followed in the West, which apparently is being followed in Delhi I'm told, with suburbanization schemes for the middle class, is likely to put such enormous economic strain on the system that it will have to be revised. And if that becomes recognized by competent authorities, eventually there will be more space for good thinking urban planners to say, 'Listen to us, there are some things we know from having observed cities around the world.' One of those is that there are gains in efficiency, in social compatibility and even in politics, to be made from constructing cities that are dense, properly organised and that can make effective use of mass-transit, that can facilitate walking and bicycle riding for very large numbers of people thereby actually using the city for what it should be.

My own research on this, which is just beginning, is an odd kind of comparison. It is to claim that U.S. cities have done it wrong. European cities for a variety of both historical, class, structural and political reasons have done it right. Western European cities use mass-transit, bicycles and dense settlement patterns to govern their cities.

How did this difference between U.S. and European cities arise?

I think this happened for historically accidental reasons. European cities were built largely before the automobile. European ruling classes had hold on central land – they didn't ever have to give it up. In the process, they kept feeding money into public transit as well as various schemes of publicly subsidized housing. There was a constantly self-reinforcing process of preservation, reinvestment and improvement of both the quality of life and accessibility in inner parts of the major European cities. Paris is a delight because it is subsidised from the national purse, but the workers suburbs around Paris are not. They are poor yet they are not affected as badly as the centres of U.S. cities.

My hypothesis is that European cities will go the way of American cities because they are paying less attention to an increasingly bad distribution of income which will allow middle class people to spend their money on cars. They will then demand highways, complain that public transit is subsidized.... And this divide will begin to expand.

I'm terrified that the American pattern which destroyed American cities is beginning to have major effect on European cities. The Germans are publicly worrying about this now and complaining that there is no life on the streets. This is the deterioration in civility, in what I call urbanity. It accompanies the deterioration in the economic vitality in the city reinforced by the enhancement of private accessibility and degradation of public accessibility, which eventually leads to the destruction of the good qualities of the city.

What about third world cities where densities are quite high, at least in large pockets, all over the city?

You know, one doesn't want to say that poverty is fun to look at, so the density is nice because it is enjoyable. One can however say that it is very poor practice to subsidize private automobile traffic. Private automobile users should pay enormous prices for their automobiles and for the use of roads. They don't because they are more powerful and because this runs against the interest of international oil and automobile companies and private firms that build highways. It runs against the interest of the very bureaucracy of civil engineers and planners, who while they think they are doing good things in the public will never do anything to undermine their own private accessibility by automobile.

This is the critique made in the book that is now being published in Portuguese by my colleague Eduardo Vasconcellos who calls the third world urbanization process, 'the creation of the middle class city'. What he means is that the middle class in the public bureaucracy plans the city for its own private accessibility: to private schools for its children, private shopping centres, private automobile routes to and from work, without meaning to be venal. But in the process they deprive those who would walk, ride bicycles or use buses from having adequate facilities which would ease their lives. Thus, a small minority is depriving the others of adequate use of the city, so that instead of enhancing the use that can be made of that city we're degrading that use based on an exclusion principle and a principle of privilege for those who are already privileged.

How rivers die

ASESH KUMAR MAITRA

WATER is the source of all life: life originated in water and is dependant on it for survival. It is the only natural source that is abundantly available, and humankind consumes only a fraction of it for sustenance. Yet increasingly, countries all over the globe are facing a water crisis.

This is due to two major constraints: (*i*) a large part of the world's water is saline and unfit for human consumption, irrigation and industrial use, and (*ii*) it is unevenly distributed. However, the total supply of freshwater, globally, is 'more than adequate to meet the current and foreseeable human needs'.[1] 97% of the world's 1.4 billion km^3 of water is saline. Out of 42 million km^3 of freshwater about 30 million km^3 (71.43%) is locked in icecaps and glaciers and a large portion of groundwater is inaccessible.[2]

Water is recycled and purified by a natural process called the 'hydrological cycle', which ensures evaporation of water from surface sources (like oceans, lakes and rivers), to form clouds which precipitate as freshwater. Oceans cover 75% of the earth's surface and thus could supply a vast quantity of water. Unfortunately, 90% of the water which evaporates from oceans, precipitates on the oceans itself and only about 10% is carried inland by the winds. The combined precipitation from the sources of surface water on land and water from the seas account for the gross continental precipitation of 113,000 km^3. Of these 36% finds itself back in the sea by way of rivers and streams. Due to the annual variability of rainfall and physiographical features, the run off rate varies and most of it flows down to the seas during periods of heavy rainfall (like the monsoon), making storage difficult.

The availability of freshwater varies according to conditions like geographical location, altitude and geomorphology. Thus there is a wide diversity in the quantity of water available for human consumption among countries. Saharan Africa and the Middle East countries suffer from a chronic water shortage. Population pressure also plays a major role in the per capita availability of water. Thus densely populated countries in Europe, despite substantial water resources, suffer from shortage of water. Belgium, for example, receives an average of 12.5 km^3. But Belgium's per capita share of 1270 M^3 per year is slightly more than twice Oman's 540 M^3 per year.[3]

Scarcity of water is determined by the number of people dependant on a source of water. If the number dependant on a flow unit, i.e. 1 million M^3, per 2000, i.e. 500 M^3/capita/year, it is considered to be adequately serviced. The wide variation in availability makes a significant difference in development prospects among nations. However, almost all developing countries, except some north African and Latin American countries, have an abundant supply of freshwater. India, for example, has a per capital availability of more than 2500 M^3 per year.

However, the geography of a country alone does not permit equitable distribution of this resource. Whereas western Rajasthan is arid desert with little water source, Bengal and Assam get

1. World Resources: World Resources Institute
2. Environment in Asia and Pacific – ESCAP
3. World Resources: World Resources Institute.

looded every year. Even those areas which receive adequate rainfall suffer rom variation in rainfall, as the annual ainfall is not the same every year. Vari-ibility of annual rainfall exceeding 40% makes an area drought prone, and nuch of peninsular India suffers from his variation.

Thus the management of water resources has been a key to the survival of human settlements, its wealth and the index of its welfare. Rivers are called cradles of civilisation because all the major early civilisations – Egypt on the Nile, Mesopotamia on the Tigris and Euphrates, Mohenjodaro and Harappa on the Indus – flourished along river banks. The basin of the Ganga not only extends over 9 states of the union and one Union Territory (Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, W. Bengal and Chandigarh), it supports more than 35% of the country's population and 43% of irrigation capability depends on the river.[4] Nearly 600 urban centres of various population sizes are located on the Ganga and its tributaries. Riverine location has been favoured because it provided for the water needs of the population as well as transportation linkage.

Rivers in India are thus regarded as holy; and nearly all of them have some mythological connection. Moreover, the major rivers such as Ganga and Yamuna have been ascribed aquatic fauna, (Dolphin for Ganga, *Makar* for Yamuna) which is also an indication of its purity and capacity to support biodiversity. The Cauvery and the Narmada have a status equal to the Ganga and Yamuna in the land they cover. No Hindu religious event starts without invoking the seven mighty rivers of India – Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu (Indus), Cauvery.

Water and religion are inextricably woven in the pattern of Indian life. One starts the day with a *Surya Pranam* standing waist deep in water. The water from the river or water source is then carried back for further offering to other deities. Before a wedding, the women of the house go to the river to invite her and make offerings. Similarly, offerings are made to the river on birth of a child. On death one is cremated on the bank of a river. The *Sradh* (final rites) are performed on the banks of a river, preferably by the Ganga at Gaya or Haridwar. This is said to absolve one of all mortal bonds with the world and bestow *Moksha* (liberation from rebirth). Similarly, cremation on the banks of Ganga and particularly at Manikarnika in Varanasi is said to ensure one's journey to heaven. Such beliefs are still alive in the minds of Indians, and disrespect to them is considered sacrilegious.

Rivers are also places of pilgrimage. Several religious festivals such as the Kumbh, Ardh Kumbh, Sankrantis, new moon and full moon days, eclipses, special *poornimas* (full moons) such as Kartik, Rush, Buddha draw phenomenal crowds to some of the towns on the banks of the rivers. More than 2 million people congregated in Haridwar for the Kumbh mela in 1986. Allahabad received approximately 10 million pilgrims during the last Kumbh Mela. A dip in the river at these locations is considered the holiest of the holy and is thus the ardent desire of every Hindu.

The network and spatial arrangement of the city needs to respect these sentiments. The river introduces a dynamic element in the urbanscape of a city and thus pre-industrial cities opened on to the river. *Ghats* (stepped platforms leading to the water) to facilitate safe access and became part of urban architecture in India, particularly at Varanasi where the architecture and activities of the people form an intricate web and provide a spectacular architectural form.[5]

The flat Indo-Gangetic terrain and the wide seasonal variation in flow pattern make the carriage of the river very wide and over the years the course of the Ganga has shifted, increasing the distance between the river and the human settlements, and rendering the ghats at Kanpur, and Patna infractuous. The Yamuna, on the other hand has a deeper carriage and the ghats at Mathura and Vrindavan provide rare architectural ensembles. Daniel's paintings of Delhi depict its close relation with the Yamuna when it flowed along the walls of the Lal Quila (now removed by about 1/2 km). Some efforts have been made recently to create safe ghats in Haridwar during the Kumbh Mela when virtually new cities have to be developed temporarily for a month or even less.

Rivers are not uniformly distributed nor do all of them carry a perennial supply of water. Most parts of India thus depend on their ability to creatively manage the water resource. Man-made lakes are a historic testimony to this effort. Famous lake cities such as Srinagar (Dal lake), Udaipur (the cluster of Pichola, Fatehsagar, Rangsagar, Swaroop Sagar), Bhopal, Secunderabad (Hussain Sagar), are examples of great feats of civil engineering to create a resource and evolve a settlement taking advantage of the created resource.

These lakes depended on their ability to harvest rainwater and run off in their catchment area. In areas of low rainfall such as Udaipur, Bhopal, Hyderabad, it required careful planning of impoundment locations to derive the maximum benefit. Apart from providing stored water for use all the year round, these lakes also recharged the underground acquifer system, so that ground water could be extracted in the settlement areas by digging wells. In addition, the filtration achieved by water during its passage through the soil provided good, clean drinking water.

These cities divided their water demand between various activities: for example bathing was done in the lake, thus saving a considerable amount of good water while drinking water was extracted from the groundwater charged well. Some cities such as Pushkar and Nainital have developed around a naturally formed

4. Ganga Action Plan.

5 See *Riverfront Conservation and Instream Uses*, Report on a joint Indo-US Workshop, A.K. Maitra.

lake. The settlement thus developed with respect to the lake, and consciously protected the ecology of the lake. In Pushkar, great care is taken so that the drainage of the city does not find outlet in the lake and the entire architectural ensemble has been created to effect this. The Udaipur lakes provided the background for a spectacular architecture of palaces, in an ensemble of physical elements rarely surpassed in the world, without affecting the quality of the Pichola lake or its water.

Lakes invariably nestle in the backdrop of hills and form a picturesque view. Reservoirs made in this century for irrigation and generation of hydroelectricity such as the Nagarjuna Sagara, Govind Sagar, Maithan, Panchat and Tilaiya are being promoted as tourist spots. At the same time, these lakes also act as climate modifiers and help in providing the ecological conditions necessary for forestry and soil conservation, and function as flood preventers as well.

Water was used as an architectural element during the Mughal period to create comfort conditions in the semi-arid climate of Delhi and Agra. The canal (*Nahar-e-bihast*) ran through the various palaces of the fort with perfumed water thrown up by fountains strategically placed in its course to humidify the air, which in addition to the moist *Khas* curtains, added to the conditioning of the air. Chandni Chowk, the major axis and shopping mall of Shahjahanabad, had a canal with fountains running through the centre. Highly ornamental geometric gardens formed during this period made dramatic use of water to create unparalleled landscape marvels, such as the Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh in Srinagar. Here landscape and architectural elements complemented each other to form a symbiotic entity. The Taj Mahal would be unimaginable as an architectural masterpiece without the surrounding reflecting pools.

Unfortunately, this respect and understanding of a natural resource did not carry itself into the post-industrial age. In India particularly, the river as a transportation corridor was displaced by the railways and roadways (less than 10% of the navigable waterways are used today). This resulted in a shift of the locus of a city as a majority of the people moved away from the river. Moreover, the water of the river was used as a resource for industrial development. Thus both the banks of the Ganga in the Calcutta belt became lined with industries manufacturing jute, paper and textiles, which discharged untreated and polluted effluents into the river. Similarly, the Sabarmati in Ahmedabad became a repository of the untreated industrial effluent discharged from the textile mills on its banks. Cities all over the world turned their backs on the rivers on which they were born and converted them into sewers.

Industrial growth also resulted in massive migration to the cities, and the city needed to expand to accommodate the population and dispose of the increased waste. The easiest and cheapest option was the river close at hand. Delhi discharges some 1700 mld of untreated waste into the Yamuna, as do Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi and Patna, into the holy river Ganga. 'The industrial revolution in U.S. took its toll and cities generally turned their back on the river. The sullage and waste water, both from domestic and industrial sources, reduced the usefulness of the river as a resource. Over the 200 years since independence all the major U.S. rivers suffered considerably'[6].

Since river water flows, biodegradable wastes have a chance to decompose and dilute. This is known as the 'assimilative capacity' of a river and depends on various factors, such as quantity and depth of water, speed of flow, temperature, quantity and composition of waste and so on. Aquatic fauna also play a major role in consuming the nutrient content of the disposed waste. When the load of pollutants increases beyond this capacity the health of the river water begins to suffer and large rivers have a higher capacity than smaller rivers, perennials are better off than non-perennials. The majority o Indian rivers today suffer from variou degrees of pollution. The stretch of rive near a city is more polluted due to dis charge volume of waste into its waters For example, the Yamuna which is highl polluted in Delhi off Okhla (cat. E) reaches a better quality (appx. cat. C) b the time it approaches Vrindavan, wher again it receives more effluents.

Lakes, on the other hand, are locked i water and, except during a heavy monsoon do not normally overflow. They tend t accumulate the pollutant load and sinc their assimilative capacity is low, the putrefy rapidly. The additional organic load not consumed by aquatic faun helps aquatic flora to grow. The additio nal nutrient becomes a rich source fo various algae and weeds, which help then to grow degrading the quality of water.

The Dal lake receives a portion o the untreated sewage from the city o Srinagar. In addition, 50,000 people wh live on the body of the lake itself discharg all manner of waste into the lake water According to some ecologists, Dal lak may not have a life of more than tw decades at the present rate of degradation The lakes in Udaipur, Hussain Sagar Bhopal and Nainital have reached alarm ing levels of pollution, mainly due to lac of control over discharge of untreate effluent and other urban activities.

Lakes are products of their catch ment, and the health of the lake is closel dependant on that of the catchment Retention of soil cover and vegetation i the catchment is a prerequisite for main taining the quality of water and depth o a lake and, thus, the dead storage capac ity. Denudation of trees and forests i the catchment – as has happened aroun Dal lake, Udaipur and Nainital – ca rapidly fill it up by bringing eroded soi into the lake, reducing its depth an storage capacity.

The depth to surface area ratio is critical component in determining evapo ration losses, and these lakes are drying up rapidly. The lakes at Udaipur an Pushkar, which survive in the arid, desert like climate because of historic manage

6. *Riverfront Conservation and Instream Uses*, Report on Indo-US workshop by A.K. Maitra. Statement by Dr. E.T. LaRoc.

ment of its catchment – dried up a few years ago under prolonged drought conditions. Hussain Sagar lake has become highly polluted due to development of industries along Kukutpalli Nullah, which feeds the lake. Management of the land use of the catchment is thus a critical prerequisite for survival of the lakes and the cities they support.

A large part of India is dependant on underground water sources for drinking water supply. Historically, in arid parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi, stepped wells were constructed to reach a stable ground water aquifer zone. The depth of the well provided a shaded enclosure, kept the temperature down and prevented loss by evaporation. The level of ground water fluctuates during the year and over-extraction can create serious problems. The Indo-Gangetic plain is a rich unconfined aquifer, but other parts of India are not as well endowed and have to carefully choose locations to tap underground reservoirs of water. Several cases have come to light where ground water contains unacceptable levels of salts and other minerals harmful to human beings and animals. Water poisoned by arsenic has been found in several districts of West Bengal. Fluoride contaminated water in several districts of Orissa and Rajasthan have made life hazardous in those areas. A considerable amount of land in Haryana has lost its productivity due to irrigation by saline underground water. Management of the ground water quality and monitoring of its extraction is thus crucial. The Central Ground Water Board (CPCB) maintains an excellent record of this resource but exercises little control over its management and extraction. This is bound to become an area of serious concern over the coming years.

The CPCB took stock of river water quality by monitoring the water of the major river basins of India over a prolonged period, and an atlas of the water quality of India has been prepared by them. In order to simplify the presentation, the CPCB had broadly classified water into five designated best use categories (A-E), where A stood for water fit for drinking untreated, to E, which made it unfit for human or animal use. The Yamuna enters Delhi with quality B, and leaves Delhi with quality E due to discharge of effluents from Delhi. The CPCB atlas reveals that almost all the major rivers of India and their basins suffer from several types of pollution, due to activities in their catchment areas, careless and unconcerned discharge of effluents from urban areas, industries and agricultural land use.

The health of water is determined by several parameters, such as the level of Coliform, dissolved oxygen, biochemical oxygen demand, PH values, colour, turbidity, temperature, other salts, traces of metals and so on. The standard known as MINAS (minimum acceptable standard) has been established to regularly monitor the quality of all surface water sources, as well as that of the discharge. The major source of water pollutants are human settlements which discharge untreated sewage and dispose their garbage. These are followed by industries which discharge toxic and often non-biodegradable waste, agricultural practices and leaching whose run offs from the farms carry harmful chemicals, pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, weedicides and so on. Studies conducted by the CPCB showed that the Ganga receives point source pollutants from urban areas, but also a considerable amount of non-point source pollutants along its course.

Thus, the management of water is no longer something that can be coordinated within the spatial confines of a small settlement or a fortified town. The magnitude of water pollution all over the world has resulted in international concern.

Since water is a resource which cannot be used without polluting it, nature has provided a hydrological cycle to replenish and purify the resource. The demand for water is increasing at a rate faster than population growth. Of the total freshwater consumed by human beings, only 6% accounts for domestic and commercial use; and agriculture accounts for 80%: the rest is needed for industrial purposes. In highly industrialised countries, this distribution changes in favour of industries. Efforts are, therefore, being made to conserve waste, by recycling it, thus conserving fresh supply. In agriculture, various methods of water conserving irrigation are being practised, particularly in water scarce countries, which can be adopted by other countries. Scientific management of irrigation and cultivation is practised by several advanced countries to conserve water. Several advanced countries have also introduced water supply quantity restrictions on industries without any impact on production. Sweden provides a good example, where paper production quadrupled while water consumption was halved, by adopting appropriate technology using water conserving methods. In India, several chemical and other water consuming factories are being forced under the Water Prevention and Control of Pollution Act to treat the effluent water to acceptable levels, before they are allowed to be discharged to water courses.

Urban and rural settlements can also conserve water through the adoption of several available bio-technologies. These combine sewage treatment with water recycling and are amenable to decentralised use and ideal for small and medium towns. Recent directions issued by the Supreme Court of India to Delhi administration to treat its waste before discharging it into water courses, should be treated as a pointer for future course of action to follow. It should be the bounden duty of all local bodies, whether municipalities, corporations, Nagar Panchayats or Gram Panchayats, to treat the effluent water to an acceptable quality before discharging it into a water body.

The need to conserve this valuable vital resource cannot be over emphasised. The ancient system of respecting the biodiversity of a water body should be emulated, as biodiversity in itself is valuable indicator for ensuring the health of a water body. Traditional management practices, coordinated with modern science, hold the key to the survival of water as a resource and, indeed, of all life on earth.

The 'missing' city

VIBODH PARTHASARATHI and POOJA KAUL

THERE are novels and plays revolving around Prague, photographs that have laid Paris bare, films obsessed by New York and Tokyo. By contrast 'the city' has rarely occupied a privileged position in Indian cultural expression.

If Paris is a 'moveable feast' then the table has not even been set for Pune. In the formative period of our civilization, 'charming' villages and 'enchanting' forests almost exclusively provided the setting for the romantic narrative of Brahminical articulations. After the spread of urbanization this Brahminical hold over expression invariably projected towns and cities variously as dens of vice, promoters of evil and centres of sin. It was only after the proliferation of Islamic influences, which viewed an urban centre as a unit of order, that 'the city' slowly emerged as the subject of narratives, whether eulogies or biographies. In the colonial period, such articulations additionally included the official documentation of cities in the form of either Imperial Gazetteers or personal compilations of travellers.

Even in postcolonial Indian literature the city has more often than otherwise been portrayed as the setting rather than the plot. This is also true of cinema where, for many decades after its advent, there was a near obsession with the rural, as if townslore has never existed. Scores of commercial Hindi films with their tired, trite use of the *Bambaiya*-setting have not been able to explore the myriad dimensions the city offers. In the last decade as a new sensibility is being realised among historians, sociologists

ıd anthropologists towards urbaniza-
•on, urbanism and the urban in their
•quiries, one has attempted to drag the
•ity out of the backdrop and present it as
ıe theme, as the plot of a film. And the
•ity chosen for this was Lucknow.

A question that arose from this
•ecision was how a city offers itself for
epresentation and how as filmmakers we
•ntended took up the offer. Is the city to
•e viewed as a symbol? Or to be thought
•f as a metaphor? As history? Can 'the
ity' be viewed independent of its citi-
:ens? At an altogether different plane,
vhat makes a city tick?

India might well live in its villages but
ts constantly changing face is most
mplified in its urban centres. The subtle
nood swings of human landscape, the
shifts in pace of modern cities are an
articulation of a growing awareness of
•heir urban identities. The objective of a
•filmmaker is to find the pulse of the
•cityand uncover what separates it from
•the hinterland, pushing it beyond
provinciality.

At a rudimentary level, a city stands out from the surrounding hinterland due to a fundamental difference in dimension. The multiplicity of these dimensions creates the complexity whose locus is the city. For a filmmaker, the central idea is to present the essential character of the city as an interplay between its constituent elements rather than to document them in isolation. It is this interplay of elements, in varying permutations, that effects the distinct identity of a city. The element of change in the city, or the lack of it, is related closely to its predominant cultural character. Moreover, its representation should be directed in a way that the mood of a city suffuses all of the above, revealing its innate texture.

Since the very dawn of its urbanism, Lucknow attracted attention and demanded comment like few Indian cities have. These include first impressions of an English war correspondent who found it more striking and beautiful than Rome, Athens or Istanbul; or resident poets like Mir and Nasikh whose passion for the city found expression in immortal couplets. It is as though Lucknow had almost forced commentators to portray it as the 'space' for their 'stories'.

More than its capital, Lucknow was the pride of Avadh – a rather small feudal kingdom located between Delhi and Calcutta – the last yet most definitive representation of Indo-Iranian culture. The evolution of *Lukhnaviat,* or a truly home-grown Lucknow way of life, has brought the city its share of analyses. Foremost among the scholarly works on 'old' Lucknow are literatteur Abdul Halim Sharar's late 19th century essay, Oldenburg's archeology of the post-1857 'colonised' Lucknow and Llewellyn-Jones' research on the Nawabi-British city.

How does the Lucknow of these works stand up to the city of today? If Lucknow had its way, it would seem that the elements that merit attention in the above works as the identity of old Lucknow still dominate as the apparent self-image of the city. Undoubtedly, the present identity of Lucknow is very visible, both physical and tangible. This is boldly evident from stylistic traditions unique to the city that have emerged in architecture, painting, *tabla*, *thumri* and *kathak*. In other cases, its identity is more a matter of detail concerning elements of design as marked in *topees*, *lotas*, wooden toys and *kurtas* typical to the city. Subtlety (*nazaqat*) and finesse (*nafasat*) are so central to the *Lucknavi* identity that it extends even to human relations. This is definitely visible today in the behaviour and mannerisms of the elder citizenry – the instinctive and yet studied clearing of the throat, eye movements, twirling of lips, relaxed gait, patiently attentive faces *et al.*

Sustaining the *Lucknavi* traditions had been the responsibility of a whole host of institutions; one says 'had' so as to reflect the transition after British and Nawabi patronage had ceased. The city which once attracted people in various domains of learning is now primarily known for being the centre of the male tradition of Kathak and Islamic theology. However eroded the primacy of these manifestations today, the city continues to offer them on a privileged terrain.

One always heard stories about the etiquette and turn-of-phrase ingrained in the Urdu spoken in Lucknow, for its language was the core of the legend of Lucknow. But what is striking today is another aspect of the city-language: almost everyone invariably slips into the past tense, the past either as a reference or in anecdotal terms. Even a fifteen year old when quizzed about a recent construction site lacerating the morphology of the city would break into an eulogy of the 'grand' park which (he had seen!) stood there 'once-upon-a-time'.

The language of Urdu was not only a socially desired manifestation of composite ideals but also a consciously designed historical product of the city-culture. It does not seem wrong to state that the Hindi-ization of Urdu in recent decades contributed in a big way towards social segregation, today's Urdu being a metaphor for fragmentation in the city-culture. As can be expected, this fragmentation is also evident through an overt segregation found in Lucknow's present morphology: its city-space. This is in contrast to residential areas such as Qawwalon-ki-gali which were based more often than otherwise on occupational identity. Today the city is witness to a re-organization of its living spaces into Hindu and Muslim enclaves, middle and lower caste ghettos and of course migrant colonies. Once the symbol of Lucknow's secular identity, the river Gomti has itself come to represent a divide in the city – that between the 'new city', the largest quarter within which is aptly christened Mahanagar, and the older *sheher* on the Gomti's southern bank.

What the British did to the city's morphology after the 1857 movement is essentially what contemporary urban planners have done to post-British Lucknow: disregarded the weight of its past; constructed 'away' from it, built against its grain. The boulevards, bungalows and markets built during the British period were as distant and alienating for the citizenry as the shopping plazas and

high rises are to most citizens today. Pre-British, British and post-British Lucknow stand out more or less as separate enclaves of the city. Consequently, 'city-life' is visibly different in these. While it is not possible to categorise them in terms of tradition, modernity is viewed differently in each of the three enclaves. For the residents of Gomti Nagar (the 'New City') it is the popularity of 'South-Delhi' inspired architecture, for traders in Aminabad it is the large export orders of handicrafts, while for the aged living in the British built Hazaratganj area, it is a carefree stroll through areas which were once open to 'Whites Only'.

For outsiders, and in particular for those associated with the media visiting to make a film on 'their city', the citizens come across as being deeply aware of the city's history and of the tradition of its representations in the past. This has prompted them to devise ways of projecting themselves – what to repeat, stress, how much to 'let-in'.

At the same time, there are some citizens whose ignorance or indifference to newer dimensions of the city are aspects which are not part of Lucknow's discourse. Such an anti-thesis of dominant socialization thrown up by the city include, for instance, rickshaw-pullers, for whom migrating into a Nawabi city offers no other fantasy than one of a secure livelihood; for the politician, the possibility of being involved in the hub of national politics and for the trader, a relatively untapped gold mine of cheap, skilled artisans. But for the man on the road it offers perpetually polluting tempos, while for the academic it offers a range of discourse awaiting to be deconstructed. And for the Public Works department (PWD), it is a time-bomb on the verge of explosion.

Most representations of Lucknow – textual, visual or audio-visual – have situated their study in the past, primarily in the 18th or 19th century. Almost 50 years after 1947 the argument for pivoting our work in the a city's present is as pertinent as it is compelling. Given the history of Lucknow's portrayal, a case for the present becomes irresistible. At the outset, however, a consciousness of the limits imposed by the form of our representation as well as that of the challenges of the medium itself is crucial. Thus, the process of selection, fundamental to all forms of representation, becomes doubly important here. What lies behind stereotyped Lucknow and below its much portrayed cityscape is what holds our interest: the mood of the present city as measured through the current changes therein and its urban identity.

For those who would unhesitatingly infer articulations from Lucknow's cultural space to be typical expressions of any 'high-culture', there are significant instances to reveal that this nostalgia for the past in Lucknow strongly includes elements of the region's popular culture, like those which originated outside the court. This does not, however, negate the fact that the dominant culture of the Avadh court did indeed have elements of hegemony, which still manifests itself through a 'reverence' towards a certain food-taste, language, etiquette, musical forms, *et al.*

In an attempt to film the city as a cultural space, the issue was not whether the subject of nostalgia in Lucknow concerns high culture or not. For if nostalgia and reverence is associated with the demise of high culture *per se*, then it should indeed be visible in all those cities of the subcontinent which had an equally blooming courtly culture in the past! Consequently, the real issue to be accented in the film was the struggle for survival of a city-culture itself endured by a longing for a distinctive *Lucknavi* culture – now imagined, now real – together shaping the city's present identity.

While it may be a nightmare for some residents, Lucknow is a film-maker's dream. A rich urban mythology, 'living sources' galore, a history conscious citizenry, metaphors whose origins are visible, 'characters' at every step, townslore to match every monument, hidden musical genius, a river, a hint of violence, artistic gestures of people...the possibilities are immense! One sees the distant and near past of the city whetl dead, fossilized, alive or struggling adapt, but visible all the same. Finally distinct pockets one sees the domin future of the city unfolding – the sha and smell, of things to come.

The city gives the feeling of a muse but an interactive museum with consci objects; 'feeling' because while one is from being alien to the city-life, each n facet (human or otherwise) presents its knowing very well that it is this which visitor is looking for. The city is aware the impression outsiders have of it – Lucknow and *Lucknaviat* which th seek. And the citizenry enjoy presenti a Lucknow as a certain combination myth, metaphor and history. After all th are at their best when soothed by nos gia, a nostalgia which we discovered also a subtle, typically *Lucknavi* man of complaint.

To get a cross-section of citizenry's relationship with the city it important that the 'characters' in the f not only represent diverging aspects of city-life but also that none should kn the other. The so-called composite cult of Lucknow was something all its citiz never fail to make a point of. A city wh being a 'today's secularist' was brus aside, the present ideology of 'secularis long pre-dates a way of life more in woven than the European origins of word could possibly connote. Howe it is also important to realise that be *Kayastha* reciting the *marsiya* (a form elegy) during Muharram or a Mus teaching and conducting Ramlila, t could equally serve as ready raw-mate for a cliched caricature of Lucknow

Today's Lucknow survives a unique amalgam of myth and history, real and the imagined. It seems as tho the present reality of the city's fast deg ing 'self' poses no threat to the Luckn of the mind; a 'Lucknow' carefully p served and dogmatically handed-dc from generation to generation. For outsider, the citizenry's obsession v nostalgia can only be explained by (matched with!) the city's incessant n for it.

India Inc.

CHARLES CORREA

COMPARED to what is happening today, there can hardly be any doubt that history will say the British did a much better job of managing our cities – the roads and pavements, the police, the municipal services and so forth. This is not because of the 'sterling character' that some claim they possessed – no, it is really because the British ran these various tasks through administrators and professionals, and not through politicians. In fact, if they had used politicians – even British ones – we would have been in the same mess here that the UK finds itself in today.

Managing our towns and cities is of crucial importance to the future of this country. Yet though today the plight of these urban centres is tragic, there seems to be no one in power sufficiently concerned about their rapidly deteriorating condition. Like the farmlands of Punjab and the coal-fields of Bihar, these towns and cities are a crucial part of our national wealth for they generate the skills – doctors, nurses, engineers – essential to the development of this nation. These are fundamentally all urban skills, generated in our urban centres, from Bombay to Coimbatore to Jalandhar to Bangalore – a spectrum of urban centres of many different sizes, inter-connected in a remarkably well-balanced network, all producing a wealth of urban skills. No other third world country is so fortunate.

To let these towns and cities disintegrate is to destroy a truly invaluable national resource. But perhaps one of the reasons we find it difficult to mange them, especially the larger metropoli, is that historically they were never really an intrinsic part of India. Before colonialisation, since we were not industrialised, our cities were either market towns or sacred temple towns (Sri Rangam, Varanasi). In contrast: Bombay, Singapore, Hong Kong, Calcutta. As Barbara Ward says, these are 'Compradore' cities – places where the colonial powers encouraged the natives to develop the skills needed to ship the gold back to London. True. But like the railways – developed by the British for their own selfish reasons but which are used by even the poorest Indian to get back to his *muluk* once a year – fortunately, the skills we acquired are exactly what is needed for economic development. Today India is one of the few third world countries that does not need UN and World Bank experts as managers.

Instead of neglecting them, we should use our cities for what they truly are: engineers of economic growth. It is politically impossible and also morally indefensible to divert government funds away from rural areas to deal with urban problems. On the contrary, we should use our cities as mechanisms for generating the funds needed for their own development and for the surrounding rural hinterland as well.

Today they cannot perform this task because of many distortions. For instance, take the crippling effect of the Urban Land Ceiling or Rent Control Acts. Without doubt, both these acts have contributed greatly to the incredible escalation of

This is an edited version of the 1995 H.M. Patel Memorial Lecture delivered in Delhi.

urban land and real estate prices in our cities: they have restricted supply, while allowing demand (and hence prices) to gallop exponentially. Thus, in the vague hope of helping the poor, all we have succeeded in doing is making the rich richer. Should urban land ceiling be replaced by a tax on undeveloped land? This would provide considerable incentive to land-owners to construct housing (which could be restricted to the LIG and MIG sectors). Or if they wanted to keep the land vacant, then it could be a source of considerable revenue to the city. For instance, in 1986, the Government of Karnataka estimated that even a very marginal tax of Rs. 3 per sq. m would net the city of Bangalore an income of Rs. 900 million a year – which could then be specifically earmarked as a Shelter Fund for the Homeless, a fund which would be many times larger than anything the government or municipality had allocated for that purpose.

Or consider rent control. In Bombay, rents are pegged at the World War II levels of over 50 years ago! Thus tenants in the city centre still pay less than 50 paisa per sq. ft – although the current market rate is more than Rs. 200, or for ownership offices more than Rs. 25,000 per sq. ft. The result? Most of the old buildings in the Fort area are a rabbit-warren of dilapidated offices and exorbitant rents. Today the condition of the once-marvellous city of Bombay is – in the true medical sense of the word – pathological, a terrifying morass of filth and decay. Any talk of Bombay becoming an international finance centre is indeed a dubious proposition as long as the players we wish to attract get such rotten value for their money. Yet there are ways out of the impasse. Re-development of these decrepit office premises can be encouraged, with the occupant and the owner sharing the increased value. This way everyone would come out a winner – including the city, because the municipal tax base would increase a hundred fold, as it would now be calculated on the new enhanced property values (which, for the first time in half a century, would be realistic and explicit). And such property taxes would mean that municipalities would no longer have to depend on octroi (no more than a form of highway robbery) to finance their needs.

Of course, any reform of the Rent Control Act should not touch housing of the lower or middle income groups, who must be protected. Instead the city should start by examining commercial premises of over 500 sq. ft. Here both sides are well off – so who are we protecting, and why? If decontrolling office premises works, then the city could follow it up by examining the case of luxury apartments and houses of over 1500 sq. ft. (that is, twice the government's ceiling for high income housing).

Getting rid of urban land ceiling and rent control would mean that real estate prices will fall. Today, to match the enormous demand, we produce but a trickle of supply – and so the astronomical prices we all marvel at are just the lunatic fringe demand: that is, people who will pay any price for that little trickle. It is rather like the last few tickets for a cricket match – you could probably sell them for Rs. 10,000 each, but you couldn't fill up the entire stadium at that price. Putting a whole lot of seats on the market (say half the stadium) is the only way to correct these lunatic fringe prices and the inflationary spiral they precipitate.

Naturally, for any such strategy to come into being, we must have decision-makers who want to actually address our urban problems. This is where perhaps the very size of India itself, its enormous bulk, allows a great deal of procrastination and waffle. When a friend of mine moved from Bombay to Singapore, I asked: Why are you doing this? Singapore, my friend replied, is like a little tug that can turn around in a few minutes; whereas India is like a huge ocean liner that takes hours to turn around or, for that matter, sink. Certainly the Titanic, mortally struck by the iceberg, kept above water (with the band playing) for eight hours or more, before she took the final plunge. That's what a big ship is all about. So whatever problems India might face, our leaders know there is no need to hur They can get a good night's sleep a wake up the next morning, and India (a her problems) will still be there.

And yet there is indeed a gr urgency to re-think the management our urban centres. Some years ago, Report of the National Commission Urbanization (NCU) highlighted a numl of new strategies which would grea improve our towns and cities. The ranged from macro policies, for exam deflecting migration away from ma cities by financing the development *mandi* towns and other smaller urb centres (which have already shown, o the last two decades, a healthy and s tainable growth rate), to the relation urban form to job generation (namely, huge investment needed for high-r buildings restricts activity to only th developers and banks who finance th and to the handful of architects, engine and contractors who can build the whereas the same amount of mo invested in low-rise buildings co be spread among many small *mist* masons and carpenters, in the baz sector of the economy – that is, exac where it generates the most jobs for poorer sections of the city. To give towns and cities the attention they desperately need, the NCU also ur the government to establish a comn sion, similar to the Atomic Energy C mission, which would monitor the ur scene, so that problems could be ant pated before they were allowed to deve into a major crisis.

From all accounts, no action been taken on the NCU Report – exc one may add in parenthesis, that the t Secretary in the Urban Affairs Mini (who is now with the World Banl Washington) used the occasion to some more staff sanctioned for hims No, the sad part of the urban scene is the problems our cities face – since each problem at least two solutions face a few minutes later. No, the tragic is that we seem to completely lack decision-making mechanisms that put these solutions into operation.

Over the last few decades the role of the administrator has been considerably diminished. Anyone who has seen the BBC TV series 'Yes Minister' knows that the system we are supposed to be imitating gets its strength – and its validity – from a very delicate balance of power between administrator and politician. Perhaps that kind of relationship did exist during the first decade of India's independence – but even if it did, it is now without any doubt long gone. Today the politician has hardly any limits to his power, and precious little accountability to the public. His interest in urban problems is minimal. In fact, his only concern is to find a way to use them for his (or her!) own financial benefit. Thus over the last few years, with urban land prices escalating more than ten times as fast as the cost of gold, an increasing number of chief ministers seem to have got control of a state only to be able to exploit its principle city. Bombay, Madras, Bangalore, are obvious examples – here citizens have no adequate defence since their chief minister is not accountable to the city he is looting, but to quite another set of people in some small town or district hundreds of miles away, from where he gets elected.

The only way this can change is if the CM is directly accountable to the people of that city. In other words, City States. Then if the city doesn't work the government will have to be accountable to the people at election-time. (Perhaps only then would the garbage be cleared).

Accountability! It is indeed the most powerful force of our time. And, perhaps the real reason why the British could control India. It was not their power that intimidated – it was their accountability that seduced us. The despotic power of the local *zamindar* India had experienced for centuries. But in this strange new management system, if you had a fight with the ticket-babu at the railway station, you could complain to the station master, who would hold him accountable at his level – on and on, right up to the Viceroy (who, in turn, was accountable to Parliament). It was an extremely systematised management system – and not just dependant on the ad hoc kindness of a particular ruler. India had never seen anything like it. Like the management systems of the Incas (who had no real weaponry and had not even discovered the wheel) it was both astonishing and effective.

Without doubt, accountability was the greatest strength of the English – it was also, as Mahatma Gandhi realised, their Achilles heel. Non-violence and fasting were perfect strategies to paralyse them: How can you put me in jail, how can you beat me, when I have never harmed you? This question put to a man like Hitler may well have earned a brutal answer. But to the undergrads from Balliol and Trinity, it meant just one thing: Time to go home.

Accountability is the reason why an otherwise rather ordinary film like Gandhi could keep audiences riveted to their seats. The issue it examines is central to our lives. Closer to our own decade, it was really the growing demand for accountability that brought down the Berlin Wall, and that propelled the Russian people to back Boris Yeltsin against the crushing might of the army tanks in Red Square. It was not the drive of consumerism (as many would have you believe), but the fact that the people of Eastern Europe were desperate – terrified to live any longer under regimes which were totally unaccountable to them.

This is in not to say that the issues of socialism are no longer relevant. On the contrary, particularly in a country of such gross privileges as India, questions of social equity and justice must be right there at the top of our agenda. But the last few decades have shown us that justice and equity cannot be delivered through a bureaucracy which, in any case, creates its own cruelties and injustices. Yet the fact that our answers were wrong does not in any way diminish the validity of the questions we raised – and the fundamental human issues that socialism sought to address will not simply go away.

Unfortunately, during all these last few decades, we in India identified socialism with state capitalism – in fact, I recall we used to employ these two labels quite interchangeably. Now, of course, we have finally realised that state capitalism doesn't necessarily help the poor. In fact, it is probably the worst form of capitalism, since it is both monopolistic and unaccountable. Anyway, through state capitalism we created a huge entity, India Inc., and only the politicians gradually began to realise that no one was really in charge of the boardroom. So they got in there, with their relatives and cronies, and they began to gorge themselves of the all the goodies around. And that is what they are still doing today. How do we get them out? There seems to be no other force in the nation powerful enough to balance them. (Though Seshan seems to have given it a heroic try).

Which brings us to A Tale of Four Cities. The last 35 years have seen truly extraordinary changes on the urban scene. A little over three decades ago, we were still optimistic (or naive) enough to believe that Chandigarh (or Bhilai or Durgapur) with their bungalows and gardens was the Brave New World towards which India was heading.

Today all that has changed. As the numbers of migrants have increased, our awareness of them has undergone a metamorphosis. In this process there are three clearly definable stages. The first, exemplified by a city like Bangalore, may be called the Age of Innocence. The poor seem content – as servants and bearers. The yuppies go to their pubs and the boxwallahs go to their dinners and clubs ('Good evening Master! How is madam and the children?'). In these stage I cities (what Reich called 'Consciousness I' cities) little guilt is felt by the urban rich about the urban poor. They co-exist in apparent harmony.

At the other extreme, we have Consciousness III cities. The epitome of which, of course, is Calcutta. Here the poor are omnipresent, washing in the gutters of Chittaranjan Avenue, cooking in the once-immaculate arcades of the Great Eastern Hotel, sleeping along the pavements of Chowringhee. In this stage of consciousness, the tensions are quite palpable – and in response, the rich

become perplexed and confused. They sense (perfectly correctly) that the poverty around them is somehow connected with their own affluence, and in the resulting confusion of remorse and guilt, they lose the ability to act. Rather, as in the case of Calcutta, they begin to accept – perhaps even enjoy – their paralysis. Many of them can be seen sort of wallowing in the decay of it all – witness the beautiful old bungalows of Ballygunj and Alipore with their peeling plaster and broken-down rusting iron gates – like an expressionistic stage set. (You've got to hand it to the Bengalis; they've taken urban decay and raised it to the level of High Art).

In the middle – Consciousness II – is a city like Bombay or Delhi. The innocence of Consciousness I ended some time ago and most of us are aware of the urban destitute and our own symbiotic role in their degradation. Yet this knowledge has not made the haves immobile and impotent. They still preserve the energy and will to act. Which way will they jump? Will they intervene to provide the poor with the water and the shelter they need? Or will they retreat into their ivory towers, waiting for rigor mortis to set in? The answers to those questions are crucial.

Where do people in Delhi fit into all this? Somewhere near Bombay in Consciousness II – but with far more privilege. I don't know the current figures, but when Delhi was a Union Territory, the central government used to hand out very large subsidies. There are so many different pockets from which government can pull out money, it is difficult to get precise accounting, but most estimates place this subsidy at about twice as much per capita as other Indian cities. Now this subsidy is for the whole of Delhi, but of course most of the money gets spent in New Delhi – to the detriment of Old Delhi and the trans-Jamuna region. Now of the 95 lakhs people in Delhi, only about 20 live in South Delhi – and of these less than 3 lakhs in what is called Lutyen's Delhi. So you can see how the subsidy per capita gets doubled again and again, and how privileged the people of South Delhi are and how heavily subsidised by the rest of this nation.

This is the real reason for all those beautiful wide roads, and flower-laden traffic islands et al. Living in Bombay, Calcutta or Madras, however affluent your residence and office, driving in your Mercedes between the two, you are bound to see a certain amount of poverty and deprivation. Not so in South Delhi – and certainly not in Lutyen's Delhi. One goes from Sundernagar to Maharani Bagh to Prithviraj Road and it's all absolutely marvellous. Living in South Delhi must be like life in one of the embassy compounds: the American or the British or the French. In fact, for more and more upwardly-mobile and ambitious Indians, Delhi really has become the Ultimate Compound – with the rest of India somewhere out there, beyond the gates.

And from here, the rest of India must look dirty and lazy and really quite embarrassing. What is so ironic is that Edwin Lutyens, an extraordinarily talented architect, but in some ways a gun for hire, was commissioned by the British to design a new capital which would proclaim proudly to the natives the might of the Empire that ruled them. We all know that. But Life is a little like *Animal Farm* – the George Orwell book where all the animals are so piteously exploited by the farmer that they decide to revolt against him, throw him out and burn his house down. Well, the revolution succeeds beyond their wildest expectations. The farmer runs away. The animals are so excited that they don't get around to setting fire to his house that night – they decide to do it the next morning. But the next day, something else turns up and before they know it they find themselves being exploited by a new set of rulers (incidentally, the pigs) who move into the farmer's house and use its imagery as a sign of their authority.

Our own performance is even more disturbing. Not only are we using the farmer's house to run the country, but nowadays whenever an important new building comes up in Delhi, we demand that it be built in a style to conform with the farmer's house. How shameful! Have we forgotten what that imagery was meant to convey and what the struggle for Independence was all about? Whatever the drawbacks to Corbusier's buildings in Chandigarh (and there may be several) they were not the farmer's house. On the contrary, they opened a door to a new landscape, a whole new future.

It is important that one thinks about this. We build our buildings, and then our buildings build us. So also our cities In Delhi, the kind of enormous setbacks insisted on by the Urban Arts Commission are really something out of the British Cantonments – which were basically anti-urban (and, one might add, anti-Indian). In contrast, the streets of Old Delhi or Jaipur, clearly defined by buildings that come right up to the plot line create the excitement and interaction that is the essence of a city. Furthermore small setbacks mean larger plinths for each building – thus fewer number of floors to reach a particular density. In New Delhi, where the FAR is 2.5 and the ground coverage is restricted to 25%, one must perforce build at least 10 storeys high to use up the full FAR. In contrast, the buildings in Jaipur, or in Paris or in Ballard Estate in Bombay, rise straight up from the plot line. Thus in a low-rise structure of just ground and 2 upper floors, they can easily reach an FAR of 2.5, after leaving generous courtyards and *chowks* for light and ventilation.

Delhi and Bombay. These two cities are really the pride and joy of India – and they both are so completely different. Together, they constitute a perfect illustration of the difference between the City Beautiful and what one might call the City Urbane. For a city can be beautiful as habitat – trees, uncrowded roads, open spaces – and yet fail to provide that particular ineffable quality of urbanity which we call: CITY.

We all know examples of this. Bombay of course illustrates the very opposite. Every day it gets worse and worse as physical environment ... and yet better and better as CITY. That is to say

everyday it offers more in the way of skills, activities, opportunity – on every level, from squatter to college student to entrepreneur to artist. The vitality of the theatre (and the ever-growing audiences), the range and talent of the newspapers and magazines, there are a hundred indications emphasising that implosion of energy and people which is really a two-edged sword ... destroying Bombay as environment, while it intensifies its quality as city.

A wonderful insight into what this quality of city is all about was suggested by the Greek planner Doxiades, the founder of Ekistics. I remember a lecture he gave, many years ago ... (with huge 60 mm square slides, throwing clear, monumental images on the screen). First slide: a diagram of a village: 250 red dots and one blue one – he's a blue person. Einstein? The village idiot? Anyway, he's different from the rest.

Next slide: a small town of 1,000 red dots. Now there are 4 or 5 blue dots, floating around.

Next: a town of 25,000 people. Ah! A historic moment: two blue people are meeting for the first time.

Now a town of 100,000 ... and we have several colonies where blue people reside; furthermore, around the edges of these colonies, some of the red dots are turning purple!

That's what cities are about. Blue people getting together. Communicating. Reinforcing each other. Challenging (and changing!) the red ones. Hence the Quit India movement in 1942 launched by Mahatma Gandhi from a maidan in Bombay. And Calcutta, in its heyday in the 1920s, a powerhouse of ideas and reforms: political, religious, artistic. Hence also the paradox: Bombay decaying as a physical plant, yet improving as a city ... as a place where blue people meet, where things happen, where ideas incubate.

Cities have always been unique indicators of civilisation, from Mohenjo-daro to Athens, to Persepolis, Peking, Isfahan and Rome. You can have great music created during rotten times, even painting and poetry – but never great architecture and cities. Why is this? Primarily because building involves two essential conditions: firstly, an economic system which concentrates power and decision-making; and secondly, at the centre of that decision-making, leaders with the vision, the taste and the political will to deploy these resources intelligently.

The first set of conditions prevails only too often: the second hardly ever. The combination is almost unique. Thus Akbar will always be Akbar – not because of his military exploits (those have been bettered a hundred times over, both before and after his time). He will always be Akbar because at the centre of that vortex, he exercised these qualities.

Cities grow (and die) much faster than we think. Visiting Calcutta today, it is difficult to understand how turn-of-the-century travellers could have deemed it as one of the great metropoli of the world... the finest east of Suez... a jewel in the crown, and so forth. Could they not perceive the grave (perhaps even terminal) illness that was already tightening its grip on that marvellously human city? No, obviously there is a time lag during which calamity is not overt. So that late into the '40s and '50s we could not see the fatal symptoms...the writing on the wall.

If you drop a frog into a saucepan of very hot water, it will try desperately to hop out. But if you place a frog in tepid water and then gradually, very gradually, raise the temperature, the frog will swim around happily, adjusting to the increasingly dangerous conditions. In fact, just before the end, before the frog cooks to death when the water is exceedingly hot, the frog relaxes...and a state of euphoria sets in (like those Californian hot-tub baths). And so my final words are: above all, beware of false euphoria – it may well mean the end is in sight. I cannot offer you any superficial hope, any facile optimism. Our cities can be saved, but we will first need to manage them a whole lot better – through administrators and professionals who are accountable to politicians who are accountable to the public. The task before you and I? To find a way to make that happen.

Books

CALCUTTA, THE LIVING CITY – Volume 1: The Past; Volume 2: The Present and Future edited by Sukanta Chaudhuri. Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1995.

THE last five years have seen a great flurry of publications on cities – large in format, rich in illustrations and heavy on the pocket. Think of Aman Nath's book on Jaipur, Rahul Mehrotra's on Bombay, S. Muthaih's on Madras and, of course, the two volumes under review. If this is not just a reflection of the increasing marketability of books in a coffee table format, then they also speak of a growing interest in urban design and history in general, and in colonial cities in particular. As the focus on conservation of cities becomes sharper, as alternative technologies makes their impact felt, as voluntary groups and NGOs proliferate, so does the need for more information on our urban past become a necessity. Perhaps this is just as well, for as cities grow and deteriorate nostalgia becomes an unreliable guide to the recovery of lost traditions.

Sukanta Chaudhury's volumes were first published in 1990 to commemorate Calcutta's 300th birthday, which turned out to be quite an event in itself. Publishers, eager to jump into the tercentenary bandwagon, put out many books – all of which rapidly made their way into the category of ephemera. But since its first publication, this set of two volumes has been widely praised and feted for the comprehensiveness of coverage, range and superb design. In fact, it was awarded a major international prize for book production.

There is no doubt that these two books on Calcutta's past, present, and future prospects are now the standard reference guides to the city. If anything, they have made the older volume history/guides in English from Cotton to Moorhouse, seem almost archaic in comparison. Gone as well is the view of the city frozen in time, recoverable only in its former glory as the capital of an erstwhile British empire. A glance for instance at some of the essays in Volume II on Calcutta's demography, economic prospects and civic growth reveals how passionately these issues still affect the city's intelligentsia.

Between the two volumes there are over eighty essays on various aspects of the city. By its sheer range (and depth) it is unlikely that any other city in India would be able to garner so many interested contributors and then match this number in sheer expertise and knowledge. The appearance now of a paperback edition is therefore to be welcomed, for it makes this rather expensive set accessible to a wider reading public.

One of the great attractions of both these volumes is its quality of easy readability. In fact, there is an evenness about the volumes (one could say almost a 'house style'), which indicates the fine editorial input that has obviously gone into its production. This, however, does not take away from the individual essays, their characteristic style or quality. There is also a judicious mix of the antiquarian and the contemporary, the descriptive and prescriptive which only enhances the value of this collection. Two aspects stand out about the contributors. Firstly, few are professional urban historians (the editor himself is professor of English) and it speaks volumes about Calcutta that so many people feel the need to invest some of their working time into the history, culture and problems of their city. Secondly, there is no doubt that this is a view of an extraordinary city by its own citizens which gives an altogether more comprehensive picture of Calcutta's past than was so far available in books. Too often, the past history of Calcutta becomes a roster of British achievements and failures: the fact that the majority of its inhabitants were Indian is easily forgotten. This bias has finally been redressed.

There are both short and long essays on diverse aspects of the city's past as well as present, and it is possible for readers both familiar, and approaching Calcutta for the first time, to find something useful to hold their attention. For the first time venturer, the first volume will serve very well. There are informative accounts of old Calcutta, which include essays on familiar topics such as babu culture, Company painting styles, music and theatre. The essays on Kalighat, Chitpur and 'The World of Ramjan Ostagar: the common man of old Calcutta', are fine attempts at recovering popular Calcutta. For the more academically inclined, Sumit Sarkar's polished essay on the Bengal Renaissance and Calcutta is the most outstanding attempt at understanding and theorizing this much-flogged topic and give it a new direction. He points to the interesting irony that the people (Bankim, Tagore) who made Bengal, and by association Calcutta, most famous spent most of their working lives in places other than Calcutta.

The essays on the Marble Palace and Victoria Memorial on the other hand, go a long way in reiterating a newly discovered sense of continuity that the educated middle classes in the city have begun to feel about their immediate colonial past. This is a tremendous change from the '60s and '70s when anything associated with British rule was the target of popular derision.

As an urban historian, I found the second volume very useful. There is nothing to match the kind of contemporary information for any other city in India that this volume provides. Crucially, the essays of Ambikaprasad Ghosh, Nilanjana Chatterjee, Raghab Bandopadhyay, Omkar Goswami and Bhabatosh Datta in their own diverse ways

try to answer the query that is doggedly behind all work on Calcutta: what went wrong? They take this further to discover whether these problems are salvageable. For those interested in town planning, there are many related essays and one fine overall conspectus, while for the ecologically inclined, the land reclamation to the east of the city should provide information, retrospection and ammunition against thoughtless expansion at the overall expense of good city life.

The essays on the various communities of Calcutta – Armenians, Jews, Chinese and Marwaris – are perhaps a trifle disappointing, if only because of the antiquarian (rather than sociological) nature of information provided. An essay on the Muslims of Calcutta should have been included – through they are a linguistically and regionally a diverse community (Kutchi Memon merchants, working class from U.P. and Bihar, east Bengal immigrants to name a few) and therefore all the more difficult to place under a single rubric.

What I missed most, however, was an essay on the Howrah Bridge. For how many countless travellers has this structure signified a first glimpse of Calcutta! In all fairness though it must be said that the cover of the second volume has a magnificent photograph of the bridge and is in some ways an ample compensation.

Partho Datta

BOMBAY: Metaphor for Modern India and **BOMBAY: Mosaic of Modern Culture** edited by Sujata Patel and Alice Thorner. Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1995.

THE renaming of the city of Bombay as Mumbai is another transition in the history of the city. It appears to be a culmination of the events – the Bombay riots – that accompanied the workshop held in December 1992 under the auspices of the SNDT Women's University and the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, of which these two books are an outcome. Yet, in order to preserve the context of these two volumes, I will continue to refer to the city as Bombay for the purposes of this review.

The two volumes are excellent reading both for generalists and for those concerned with urban studies. Each article is lucid, well-argued, and relies on the historical and ethnographic data to provide a readable narrative of events and structures. Since many of the reviews already published about these books deal with the Shiv Sena and other political developments in the city, I shall exercise the option of concentrating largely on the second volume (Mosaic of Modern Culture) rather than the first. In terms of style as well, the articles by authors in this volume display a greater exuberance about their material, sometimes even an uncritical attitude towards it, all of which make for a richer tapestry about the city and its sensibility.

The articles by Jim Masselos and Norma Evenson are the most interesting in this volume because of the connections they display with almost every other article. The former ('Migration and Urban Identity: Bombay's Famine Refugees in the Nineteenth Century') presents rich data showing how famine refugees were perceived by the city authorities; these categories also display perceptions about the boundaries of the city itself – its 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. In the famine of 1824-25, most of the victims from Kutch, Kathiawar and parts of the Deccan to the city, were perceived as destitute victims and provided with work; the official response was relatively uncomplicated. By the time of the famine of 1888-89, and the one that followed a decade later, a series of legal measures had come into being – the Act XIII of 1856 that prohibited begging, for instance – that allowed these victims to be categorised as beggars, a source of infection and disease, and as foreigners (since most of them belonged to the princely states). This hardening of official attitudes coincided with the greater power of the British empire which assumed control over Bombay after the Third Anglo-Maratha war in 1819.

By the end of the 19th century, this exercise of authority was to become more confident. The effects of changing patterns of power on territory and land use are discussed in Mariam Dossal's paper ('Signatures in Space', Vol. II) and in Radhika Ramasubban and Nigel Crook's article on 'Spatial patterns of Health and Mortality' in the same volume. But these emerge more vigorously in Evenson's paper ('An Architectural Hybrid', Vol.II). Evenson points out the original town of Bombay was a walled settlement on the eastern side of the island with both Indian and British inhabitants. The Indian buildings reflected regional styles adapted by Parsi, Bohra and Bania groups to the city. By the mid-century, when the town had spread beyond the Fort, a great deal of building activity took place (mostly colonial in origin) which reflected popular European styles, adapted to local needs. Among these was the Gothic (the Victoria Terminus) and the Indo-Saracenic (the Prince of Wales Museum).

This construction activity was paralleled by a decline in traditional styles of architecture as well as the increase in chawl dwellings which came to house the large number of lower class residents of the city. The influence and power of European styles of building continued in the 1930s and 1940s with the expansion of the city through reclamation, for instance, in the Backbay area. Evenson seems to suggest that after independence, new building activity in Bombay has been haphazard, largely unimaginative, with no attempt to systematically plan a built up environment for the growing city.

It would appear from most of the articles in this volume that the period from the mid-19th century up to the decade soon after independence marked the greatest ferment and creativity in cultural life – whether it be in art (Yasodhara Dalmia, 'From Jamshetjee Jeejeebhoy to the Progressive

Painters'), literature (Sonal Shukla, 'Gujarati Cultural Revivalism'), or theatre (Shanta Gokhale, 'Rich Theatre, Poor Theatre'). It is possible that different cultural forms came to dominate in the later periods – for instance, films - but most articles convey an impression of a stasis, if not a decline, in the level of aesthetic production (except, perhaps, dalit writing).

That a certain kind of stagnation has arrived in its economy is also brought out by Nigel Harris' article ('Bombay in the Global Economy', Vol.II). He points out that the problems facing Bombay economically are less due to the paucity of resources in the city than a neglect by authorities to plan and administer the city's development effectively. This is, of course, true not only of Bombay but other Indian cities, and the suggestions he makes for the need to strengthen local government in the city (in contrast to the centralised economic diktat so far), as well as a research and information system that addresses urban issues in a national/ international context are very appropriate. This suggestion finds echoes in some other articles as well.

It is in this context that one is forced to ruminate on the fact that urban studies in India have been a neglected field. The fact that by the end of the century, roughly half the country's population will live in urban areas must persuade social scientists to focus on urban research in a far more sophisticated manner than previously. These two volumes on Bombay are, therefore, an important step in this direction.

The only lacuna that one finds is the hesitation of the editors to articulate a theoretical framework for the study of the city or urban processes in India which, given the range and richness of the contributions, was a possible project.

Smriti Srinivas

MADRAS: Its Past and Its Present by S. Muthiah. Affiliated East-West Press, Madras, 1995.

THE Mughals gave us Lahore, Delhi and Agra, and the British Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Most of them are conglomerations of older towns and villages. In the case of Madras these were towns of lilies and peacocks (Triplicane, Mylapore). Interestingly, neither the Mughal nor the British towns are clones of each other. Bombay is tall and narrow, Calcutta has stately public spaces, while Madras is a garden city (in the case of Calcutta and Madras, the present tense is rapidly becoming *past* tense). Yet today, they are beginning to look similar – the same hoardings, the same high-rise, the same street names. The challenge before us is to restore some of the beauty of the earlier days so that this will not be fossilized in pretty books of photographs.

Ranking high in the legacy of the British are the paintings and photographs they prepared of Indian townscapes and landscapes, such as the superb collections in the India Office Library in London. There are also accidental discoveries such as led to the production of this book – 1515 photographic glass negatives of the firm of Wiele and Klein (1880s-1930s) had been left in Connoor with a Miss Cooper, who had served as nanny to one of their families. They were carefully extracted from the wooden boxes, prints made and the proceeds helped to make Miss Cooper's situation a little more comfortable in her last years. The story of these photographs and of the changes in photographic technique is narrated sympathetically by Harry Miller, a veteran photographer of Madras. A team of enthusiastic photographers took pictures as far as possible of the same views as had been taken over 50 years ago, and explanatory notes were prepared by S. Muthiah, already well known as the author of two books on Madras. He, like Thankappan Nair in Calcutta and Rahul Mehrotra and Sharada Dwivedi in Bombay, knows his city, and writes with a wonderful mixture of informed knowledge and concern for the deterioration of buildings and open spaces.

Madras is a city with many firsts – the oldest British settlement in India, the first city in the empire to have a municipality, the first to have trams (in 1895, even before London, p.88). It was the first city to be built in the Indo-Saracenic style – Chepauk Palace, built by the British for the Nawab of Arcot in 1768 (p.52) set a pattern which was continued a century later by Chisholm, who was to Madras what Lutyens was to Delhi. The pictures in this book show us the strong presence of Chisholm, with the distinctive towers, 'country caps' and narrow domes of his buildings, all along the Marina Beach and Mount Road. Many of these still exist and are used for the same purpose for which they were built. Many were unnecessarily modified – the additions to Presidency College in the 1940s (p.56) were no improvement. Spencer's (p.114), legitimately called 'the finest departmental store of the east', has been destroyed and in most places the setbacks have been sacrificed to the widening of roads. Chepauk cricket ground's lovely clubhouse (p.46) was destroyed in the 1970s to make room for a hideous concrete-domed structure.

After Independence, our cities have been invaded by new icons – Sivaji in Bombay, Lenin and Subhas Chandra Bose in Calcutta, the Tamil heroes in Madras, and Gandhiji and Nehru everywhere. Without the imagination to build new towns as earlier rulers did, the last 50 years have seen the pathetic victories of name-changing and statue-substitution. Round Tana became Anna Circle, and the pretty Mughalesque canopy contributed by the Raja of Vizianagram (p.92) to house a fountain and afford shelter from the heat was demolished to put up a statue of the great Anna himself. Grant Duff's inspired Marina waterfront (p.50) is now garish with memorials to Dravidian heroes. Elsewhere high-rise has taken over – as at the Esplanade Road (p.164) or the Hotel d'Angelis (p.100). Gracious arcaded verandahs have been uglified, Buckingham Canal (p. 137) and the beach where the famous *masula* boats

literally tossed Europeans into Madras (p. 162) are gone forever.

Much, however, continues unchanged. The flower-sellers (p.176) still do brisk business, despite innovations in women's hair ornaments; temple *rathas* are still pulled on their annual *yatras* (p. 66). There are areas which are greener today than 70 years ago. Mowbray's Road/TTK Road had its trees cut down in the 1970s but more were planted and have grown to a wonderful height (p. 148). The great Thomas Munro, from his vantage point at Walajah Gate (p. 80), now in a park tended by ANZ-Grindlays bank, will recognise his Madras but deplore its ugliness. Among the buildings which today appear well maintained are churches (pp. 108 and 122).

Bombay – and now Maharashtra – has set an example to the country in listing heritage buildings and enacting laws to protect them. In Madras also there is talk of a Heritage Act: the plan to restore Victoria Public Hall (1887 Chisholm, p. 140) also sounds like a good beginning. Like all our historic towns, Madras has come to terms with its history, and this book will help enormously in generating the necessary concern.

Narayani Gupta

THE CITY IN INDIAN HISTORY edited by Indu Banga. Manohar, New Delhi, 1996.

TRADITIONAL Brahminical aversion to urban centres, viewed as dens of evil, immorality and vice seems to have influenced early literature in India which has a distinctively rural plot and setting. Bypassing the harsh realities of rural life, such Brahminical articulations were obsessed with a romantic portrayal of the countryside giving birth to a range of associated metaphors in language and literature concerning non-urban societies.

It is only under the influence of Persianised Islam, which viewed the city as a fundamental unit of order manifested in efforts of architecture and hydrology, that the city was given its due in literature and poetry. In the body of work associated with the social and cultural history of India, it was only after influences from Euro-American and Latin American urban studies and the broad spectrum of knowledge often clubbed together as feminist studies, has the city appeared as the plot, space and focus for our social scientists.

Given this context, the putting together of such a volume is long overdue. S.C. Mishra's contention in the introduction that urban history, being neither an independent discipline nor an autonomous sub-discipline, needs the collaboration of a variety of (converging) social sciences is rather dispensable given the trans-disciplinary nature of most pioneering work today. What is heartening, however, is his belief that the way in which urban centres developed in relation with rural societies in india, makes it necessary to pursue urban history as complementary to the large literature produced on agricultural society, an approach also promulgated by Champakalakshmi.

Accusing historians of not working on themes of urban history, Mishra finds studies by non-historians on urban processes 'unfortunately' concerning themselves with phenomena fairly recent in origin. His first allegation does not hold any ground in the light of in-depth works on pollution, trade-unions and broad aspects of violence. As far as the second is concerned, one is disappointed precisely with the lack of work on recent and contemporary processes in our cities associated with subjects like popular culture, education and disease.

R.S. Sharma's piece, one of three on urbanization in early historical India, is a lucid account of the role iron technology, metal money and foreign trade played in enabling post-Vedic urbanization to be different and longer than that in the preceding Bronze Age. In contrast to this, Aloka Parashar seeks a regional perspective, focusing on the disparate trajectories of urbanization. However, Champakalakhsmi's contribution on urbanization in the South also analyses the Second/Chola phase of urbanization with respect to the first phase, that during the Sangam period. The author focuses on rural-urban linkages and analyses trade and crafts with the associate polity and religion, thus creating a complex matrix for their relevance to urban development.

As with most anthologies concerning Indian history, contributions are divided along three historical 'periods': ancient, medieval and colonial – a periodization which, despite receiving criticism from serious scholars, is inevitably used. Satish Chandra's short but dense article delineates the desired empirical and theoretical lacunae in studies of medieval towns. Of special importance to him is the need to emphasise the cultural role of towns and their position as a locus for the development of military technology. Compared to this, Grewal's review of past scholarly work on the study of various aspects of urban centres in the Sultanate and Mughal period is relatively weak.

A must for all Delhiwallahs is Nurul Hassan's detailed description of the city's smaller buildings, which is in fact a comment on the morphology that holds and moulds the mundane life of its citizenry. These pages of bountiful information can serve as an ideal source material for school projects on local history. Relatively bland in comparison is Reeta Grewal's sketch of British influenced urban morphology in the Punjab plains. One would have liked to see the author move beyond the rather simplistic 3-tiered classification of towns (indigenous, anglicised and model colony) to include how urban morphology affected pre-British cultural and familial networks.

The vitality of pre-colonial urban centres in South India, their distinct identity, numerical presence and subsequent decline under British authority is the theme of Narayani Gupta's essay. My attention was drawn to her

correlation between the presence of popular narratives of the period concerning 'ruined townships' and the decline of urbanism caused by political demotion, bypassing of trade or demographic decline faced by most towns – phenomena accompanying the rise of Madras as the colonial hub of South India.

Such de-urbanization and urban de-industrialization is also illustrated in Atiya Kidwai's detailed statistical analysis of census reports on Calcutta's hinterland, an area containing about half the population of the subcontinent. Her thesis, that the economic structure of cities was moulded by structural changes in the economy and further urbanization determined by metropolitan colonialism, is a welcome continuation of the centre-periphery approach pioneered by Amin and Gunder-Frank. Kidwai shows that 'colonial urbanization' (that is, the rate of change of urban dwellers to the total population) was characterised by urban atrophy whose manifestations span from the economic to the cultural. This might be helpful to some of our current economist-planners in demonstrating the manner in which selective, quantitative statistics hide the larger, especially qualitative, aspects of a social milieu.

Kanchan Jyoti seems at first to present delightful trivia ranging from the eating habits to the sources of light in urban Punjab. However, the bulk of her paper traces the definitive changes in Hindu, Islamic and Sikh religious bodies, specifically their educational and media arms, as a reaction to the entry of Christian missionaries in Punjab. Such transformations while instituting an anti-colonial political consciousness also resulted, as the author rightly emphasizes, in fostering communal identities in Punjab.

None would disagree that the conceptual structures associated with post-Mughal lower classes cannot be looked at as simple 'analogies' of Anglo-American pre-industrial classes. Having realised this, Neeta Kumar's contribution is essentially an attempt to make social theory 'travel' in the context of her work on urban culture in Banaras. While her contention that working-class history needs to transcend its focus on prototypical rebel activity to include cultural expressions of their emergent proletarian consciousness is called for, her preference for vernacular periodicals as source material on lower class urban history needs much qualification. Moreover, the reader is left in a hazy lurch about the 'indigenous dimensions' of Indian urban culture which the author associates with 'a space and a tradition as sources of meaning'.

Measuring urban development in terms of the growth of institutions, Kusum Pant-Joshi presents the contrasting yet closely correlated trajectories of Allahabad and Lucknow. But what about the developments in smaller towns? Studies on urbanization in the colonial era uniformly agree that the dominance of the nascent middle classes in urban areas did not affect the dominance of pre-British leadership in smaller towns. For me the importance of Indrani Ganguly's contribution is not its merely being another validation of this thesis. Rather it is the degree of resonance between Burdwan's urban trajectory (as contextualised by Ganguly within urban society in general of the time) and today's urban fabric which makes her work relevant. I mention two such instances. The author's description of the tilt in urban social structures of the times has a strong parallel to what appears to be happening to the 'traditional' elite of today with the rise of the 'new' middle class in the metros. Secondly, the coming of the railways, instead of bringing prosperity, brought a form of malaria to Burdwan, which is exactly what happened with the coming of the Indira Gandhi Canal (a component of 'development' equivalent to the railways) in north-western Rajasthan.

The urban areas being the pivotal bases of British military authority resulted in their creating 'institutions of civil activity' in the cities directed at managing their hegemony. This activity, as is often debated, had something to do with the initial evolution of nationalist consciousness, which at first transformed the urban classes. In the last essay of this volume Ravindra Kumar boldly argues that urban areas were the locus of the national movement as a whole – from the very first anti-British wave in 1857, through the Gandhi-inspired Rowlatt, non-cooperation, civil-disobedience phases, until the disruption of urban authority in 1942. The author vehemently asserts that it was only after the 'independence' of the socialist-led unions in the industrial cities that a distinctive working class tone was imparted to the anti-colonial movement; unions leading the subversion of British transport and communication, within and between cities. This not only challenges the myth concerning the rural base of the Gandhi-Patel led freedom struggle but also reaffirms the assertions of certain quarters of scholarship that the role of the emergent urban proletariat was limited by Gandhi who feared their involvement would heighten class conflicts.

However, there are certain dimensions of the city and of urbanization and urbanism itself which this volume ignores. One would have liked some views on the formation of urban identity, emergence of townslore, urban influences on musical forms, impact of urbanization on health and the phenomenon of 'urban villages'. Thus, although over half the contributions are excellent in themselves, as an anthology this volume suffers from the editor's narrow conceptual approach towards 'the city' and city-life.

Vibodh Parthasarathi

UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPING METROPOLIS: Lessons from the City Study of Bogota and Cali, Colombia by Rakesh Mohan. The World Bank/ Oxford University Press, 1994.

URBAN studies in India is a neglected area of concern among both professionals and academics. Urban planners are at best guessing at work but, in fact, acting out fantasies

taught in classrooms decades earlier (often courtesy a Fulbright or Commonwealth scholarship). As urban problems multiply (slums, pollution, deteriorating services, crime, plague and other pestilence), the task of fashioning an effective course of action through a better understanding of the urban environment appears more daunting. Few organisations in the third world have the resources or imagination to attempt a comprehensive study of individual cities prior to following prescriptive action. Most are merely reacting to the more pressing issues or vociferous demands, compounding existing problems.

The National Commission on Urbanisation 1988, attempted a comprehensive exercise for the country as a whole (*Seminar* 372, August 1990, pp. 46-50), but its recommendations have been consigned to the archives in favour of business as usual which consists of putting together suspect statistics and modelling population growth to estimate demand for additional urban land. Growth is planned contiguous to existing urbanised areas, but by the time these 'planning' exercises are completed, conditions change and new sets of actors and growth processes are in place. Although there are delays in implementation, equally important is the fact that there are few attempts to understand how people and economic enterprises behave in rapidly urbanising conditions before a master plan is prepared. Thus the evidence from every master plan prepared in the country – even in a privileged city like Delhi – is that violations are the norm.

Urban planning in developed countries too has problems but, by and large, it serves the aspirations of the majority because sufficient knowledge on how people behave in an urban environment is available to guide urban planners. Unfortunately, such knowledge of third world cities is inadequate.

The book being reviewed is modelled on an American classic – *The Anatomy of a Metropolis* by Edgar Hoover and Raymond Vernon (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1959) which reported on the study of the New York Metropolitan Region and looks at two cities in a developing country, aiming to fill an important gap in our understanding of the growth of third world cities. It summarizes extensive empirical work on the cities of Bogota and Cali in Colombia undertaken between 1977 through 1981 by an interdisciplinary team from the World Bank and local officials. Rakesh Mohan, one of the participants, interprets and integrates the main findings of the different segments of this comprehensive project which rigorously examined five major urban sectors: housing, transportation, employment location, labour markets and public finance.

Mohan explains that at the beginning of their research the study team expected that development patterns and behaviour in Bogota and Cali would resemble those observed in industrial countries in the early decades of the 20th century. In fact their research showed that households, workers and firms had a strong behavioural similarity with those currently observed in industrial countries. This led them to conclude that but for the lower levels of income, higher residential densities, greater use of transit facilities and lower service levels, it is the similarities – not the differences – which are striking. They also give support to the view that the basic tenets of urban economic theory are applicable in large cities of the third world where household and firm decisions are determined in *market settings* and where passenger travel and freight transport are motorized. This offers an effective rationale for tackling the supposedly intractable problems of third world urban development: 'A basic conclusion is that cities are not chaotic collections of unpredictable activities. Their strong patterns of behaviour enable us to formulate policies for transport, housing, urban labour markets, and local public finance and improve the management of cities'. Such optimism may not be shared by local officials who have to actually manage cities in the third world on an everyday basis. Yet it cannot be easily dismissed and may be of compelling interest to those interested in the future of third world cities.

The over-arching premise of this study is that city growth is an economic phenomenon, and that developing constructive metropolitan policies require an understanding of the behaviour of individuals and firms as they are determined by the forces of economic development. In the absence of such an 'economic' perspective, the growth of cities is inevitably viewed as abnormal phenomena causing alarm among policy makers. Thus, there is a widespread negative view of the rapid growth of cities in the developing world whereas, in reality, it should be seen as a natural concomitant of economic growth. Moreover, because large metropolitan centres did not appear in what are today's developed countries until their economies had reached a comparatively advanced stage, it is presumed that the emergence of such cities in poor countries is an unusual phenomenon. Consequently, urban policies in these countries attempt to slow the growth of large cities rather than view them as 'generators of economic growth', to quote the National Commission on Urbanisation, and manage their growth in a positive and healthy fashion.

One of the objectives of the study, as mentioned earlier, was to seek clues for transferability of existing tools designed to study cities in rich countries by comparing the spatial patterns of cities in rich and poor countries. Its assessment at the end was that the similarities outweighed the dissimilarities; regularities in their patterns of development showed that economic forces strongly condition the course of urban development and that markets play an important role in the allocation of resources to urban areas all over the world. Thus, they found that it was possible to administer and manage city growth efficiently by adopting policies which encouraged the public use of private incentives. Their findings stress that urban policies should be oriented as much to economic issues as to the physical 'bricks and mortar' issues of infrastructure.

While this is an important message for Indian urban planners and should be emphatically endorsed, it is not as easy to endorse the strategy advocated to achieve the ends. This resistance comes partly in reaction to the massive weight of the study (like killing a fly with a hammer), and partly because the study appears to be deeply flawed.

To begin with the study appears predisposed to selective interpretation of data. Colombia may be a third world nation compared to its prosperous northern neighbours, but a look at its economic and demographic profiles would reveal the significant differences in relation to others in the same category. The far higher per capita GNP, relative rural prosperity and favourable export earnings (despite fluctuating coffee prices) indicate that it would be dangerous to draw lessons from the Colombian experience as the book (and the World Bank) advocates. Instead, with a reasonable shift in perspective, one could legitimately question why conditions in Colombia are not any better and arrive at different conclusions.

More serious, however, is the central message: the state needs to do little to alleviate urban problems, because the magic of the market – if permitted to operate freely – will accomplish that trick. This is not the place to discuss this issue, suffice it to say that under *any* circumstance such a proposition is questionable. Given the conditions in India today, however, following such a prescription would be dangerous.

A.G. Krishna Menon

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND URBAN PLANNING by M. N. Buch. Tracts for the Times, No 2. Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1993.

GIVEN the significant thematic niche established for itself by the Tracts series, it seems logical to place it within the idea of the series. Since the author has a long association with the field of urban affairs, one expected a searching examination of experience in urban planning over the past decades, and a reflective essay on a rich career. Sadly, what one finds instead is a somewhat facile, simplistic, and subjective approach to planning, hesitant to take clear positions on critical or controversial issues.

On the other hand, it emerges as a useful reflection of the attitudes which underlie professional approaches to urban planning and to the environment in the country today. These attitudes – seeming liberal, but frequently conservative – tend to remain hidden in the course of everyday exchange and especially in the course of popular sentiments and consciousness being co-opted by the political and professional establishment. This contributes to a deep and unresolved tension in public discourse. It therefore becomes useful to review this monograph in some detail, despite its many weaknesses and overall failure.

In the current context of 'liberalisation', and the sustained attempt to undo established processes and institutions of planning, this review may be misrepresented as another attack on planning. On the contrary: it tries to learn something about what goes under the name of planning and by doing so, suggest what it needs to be about. It is in this sense – because it reveals the thinking of an influential school of planning – that this is an important book.

Like many books on this area, this monograph repeatedly expresses formal concern for 'the poor' and their wretched condition. Yet the author uses selective facts and figures to put in the dock precisely those for whom he expresses concern, arguing that 'the urban problem' is basically caused by 'the population problem' – the fault of ordinary, especially poor, people. This schizophrenia is revealing, especially in a monograph that concerns itself with environmental consciousness. 'Environmental consciousness' without social justice consciousness, is false consciousness. Less charitably, it is an elite consciousness.

Among other things, Buch does not refer to the questions on which debate is currently raging in the fields of environment and urban planning: gross inequality in access to the means of democratic participation and control; discrimination in urban planning against women but also growing gender consciousness, including in relation to property; the heavily skewed land ownership (both in urban and rural areas), and the struggles against this; the role of the dirty ('black') economy and of political patronage in urban development, and the nexus between them. These questions are becoming critical in India as more people in cities are impoverished and marginalised and/or belong to oppressed sections, and even more so as their consciousness rises, both of inequality and discrimination and of their identity and rights. It is difficult to believe that a planner as prominent as the author, has no views on such matters.

Any publication on urban planning in India in 1993 should also look at the impact, implications and imperatives of the new developmental buzzwords like 'globalisation', 'new economic policies' and 'structural adjustment'. And surely, it should also have discussed the country's first National Housing Policy, which was not finally passed the year before the book (1992), preceded by a five-year public and parliamentary debate – to which the author also substantively contributed. Such omissions by the author are surprising, and difficult to understand.

The book also carefully steers away from 'controversial' subjects, such as the role and liabilities of big builders, private corporations; or the democratic rights of citizens in cities. Perhaps most surprising of all given its title, is the fact that it ignores the role and impact of the many important citizens' movements for environmental protection and democratic urban planning that have taken place in the country to build social and environmental consciousness and to demand justice. The question of wetlands gets a passing mention – but not the people or the movements

involved, or the issues they have raised; and the other issues, not at all.

The Bhopal tragedy in December 1984 which has raised some of the most critical issues in our times about environment and urban planning. It is extraordinary that neither the disaster nor the people's movements that had fought for social and environmental justice and the fundamental issues they and others have raised for nearly a decade figure here.

The result is that the monograph is ultimately reduced to a basic primer on what can most charitably be termed as tame bureaucratic issues in the field and lacks a critical edge.

Finally in this overview, what is disturbing about this book is the manner in which it relates to the Report of the National Commission on Urbanisation (NCU). Since the author was the Vice-Chairman of the Commission, he may in fact just be quoting his own report in this monograph, without saying so. It is unfortunate that these references have been omitted.

The monograph starts with a standard presentation of 'The Population Problem', giving the impression that the main problem faced by cities today is 'population' and that the primary solutions to this problem are (*a*) population control and (*b*) 'development' in 'the rural areas' (to keep 'them' from migrating into 'our' cities). But, despite a presentation of tables and figures, there is no attempt to explore the cyclical link between planned development and commercial exploitation in both rural and urban areas, destruction of the environment and common resources, and the pauperisation of people, with both population and migration. Nor is there any discussion of differential consumption of resources in society, let alone the questions of ownership and control. There is a tendency to treat 'population' almost as a separate and distinct problem. This glaring shortcoming, which misses the central planning debate of our times, the inconsistencies that exist between figures presented and analysis developed on the primacy of metropolitan cities (pp. 2-4) seem to not even matter.

There is a tendency to keep away from specifying precisely which sections in society contribute most to the population growth the author professes concern about, merely implying that it lies with the labouring and working classes. The monograph seems to think that figures can prove its point, but instead of supplying them assumes that population break-ups are easily available to readers. Most importantly, what this section reveals is a failure to look at, comprehend, and explicate the city and urban society as dynamic structure and process: as a constantly evolving resolution of competing and conflicting interests, in which new migrants and 'the people' which he sees to be the problem, are in fact the key actors – and where 'slums' have to necessarily exist – just as do the poor, and their struggle for justice. Instead, the image that emerges from the monograph is of a retired planner, tending to his back garden and dreaming about what an ideal garden (read 'city', or 'world') would be like, divorced from the complexities of interest groups. In this world, The City is a benevolent enterprise, 'invisibly' organised and managed.

Witness, as an example, the following passage:

> 'Viewed from another angle, the large cities of the developed (sic) world, *made free from population pressure,* could use resources for improvement of the existing cities. They would be able to eliminate urban slums, undertake major programmes of urban renewal and place a greater emphasis on the conservation of heritage areas. A city which has achieved equilibrium in population growth can afford to sit back and decide what parts of the traditional city are to be preserved. Such cities would have the breathing time and space to plan radical improvement of the infrastructure, reduce population, alter the economic and employment structure of the cities, provide greater leisure time to their citizens and take steps for environmental improvement of the city region....' (p 13; emphasis added.)

The same message expressed differently, comes through even more resonantly in the following passage taken from the NCU report (the only place in the monograph where a quote from the report is actually attributed to an individual, in this case the Chairman, Charles Correa):

> 'This brings us to a cardinal principle of urban form throughout history that, in the past, the relationship between buildings and cities was analogous to those of spare parts to machines. Thus it was possible to add a spare part (e.g. a new house in Jaisalmer or a shop in the bazaar in Hyderabad) because one (sic) knew what the whole machine (sic) looks like. Today our city centres (like down-town USA) are beginning to look like a collection of spare parts, with no one having the slightest idea of – nor responsibility for – what the whole machine is about.' (p. 47.)

The underlying message of both is that our cities need to be centrally owned, or at least centrally-driven and controlled, so that 'one' can know what 'the whole machine is about'. The examples continue to depend on this centrality: Harappa, Mohenjodaro, Hampi and Jaipur. Extraordinarily, Buch neither addresses nor seems aware of the fact that we today live in radically changed circumstances, in a society which is still highly unequal but where there is now acute competition for all resources, including urban space. And that it is precisely this unequal competition and concentration of wealth that today leads to the perversions in our cities. Can the answer to this incoherence still be the invoking of centralised feudal control (as distinct from modern state planning), or longing for a world without pressures? At the same time, it has to be said that the irony of invoking a 'modern' image such as a machine, to recall a pre-industrial order, is also not without its humour.

The idea and imagery of buildings and cities as machines is an old one and an obsession of many architects who project themselves as being 'modern'. The crucial

commonality however, is that all of these 'visionaries' worked in powerfully industrialising or industrialised countries, and even if they were sometimes portrayed as dissenters or rebels in their respective times, they were equally an important expression of that driving power. No less important is the reality that these societies and this drive, in their times, devastated first their own environments and then those of their colonies, and that they pre-supposed and required enormous concentration of non-democratic power. It is precisely this drive which is responsible for much if not all of the urban disaster that we see around us, in the South as well as the North. The quotes make clear how those who would be the visionaries of a new India, seem to be yearning for that same power.

It is not as if Buch is unaware of differences and inequalities, however, and of their likely outcome. Again quoting the NCU report '...In the decades to come who knows how much political tension and physical violence will be triggered off by the flagrant display of wealth which co-exists with the rising expectations of the poor and with the appalling conditions of congestion and pollution which form their environment?' (p. 16.)

But Buch moves not to analysing how 'flagrant wealth' is amassed and deployed, who has it, what its nature and structure is or even what its expression is, in the urban context (not merely buildings, which are merely the outward expression; much more so, the spatial configuration of the city), what processes of deprivation, destitution and devastation are entailed in the course of its being amassed, and the social, political and environmental consequences of such 'wealth'. His suggestion is that what is required is to limit the poor, through 'rural development' and population control – and thereby to 'free the space' for his ideal City to start functioning. Later in the monograph, he does spare some sentences for the social costs of urbanisation, development and the impact both on farmers and tribals, but there is still no attempt to develop a perspective on wealth, other than in terms of reducing wastage.

As already said, Buch does not always spell out everything, or take his points to their logical conclusion; but it does seem from other passages that he also has other background thoughts which in fact give a closer idea of how he sees not only the process of planning but also the resources around us. Quoting once again from the NCU report: '...Like our farm lands, rivers and other natural resources they [the cities] are a crucial part of our national wealth.' (p. 15)

Cities can indeed be seen as part of our 'national' wealth, but what is the meaning of 'national', and who does 'the nation' belong to? Here Buch has raised a fundamental point: That if the city is indeed treated as the commons, like rivers and forests, then customary understanding and law in India tells us that this *belongs to the people*, not to the state; and that all those living in and around the commons have the right of access and use. But this directly conflicts with the vision of this monograph; because 'National wealth' then becomes wealth managed by the rulers.

This populist inversion is not yet fascism or imperialism in planning, but – however unintended in this case – this is the same argument on the basis of which Paris was devastated and rebuilt by Hauptmann, Mussolini rebuilt large sections of Rome, and indeed so many 'great cities' of the world were taken away from the 'chaos of the people', and given the 'order of the rulers'. Indeed, in many cases the cities were rebuilt in the name of the 'order of the gods' that the rulers believed in, in order to legitimise and strengthen their rule. Looked at closely, therefore, the collective and underlying meaning of the author's (and the NCU's) view of poverty, and implicitly of how it should be handled, seems to only underscore this world-view:

> '...The transference of poverty from a rural environment, where it is well spread out over space, to a city where it is concentrated, presents the most horrifying images of independent India.' (p. 16.)
>
> I leave this quote without comment. This is the distilled wisdom of the country's first (and only) National Commission on Urbanisation. The profound challenge they place before us however, is to try and comprehend what the alternatives are : What, indeed, is the nature, structure, and process of a *democratic* city? And 'Where do I, as an individual and a citizen, stand on this issue, of how my environment should be planned of how planning should take place?'

Later, comparing the situation in India and China (p. 22), in terms of land available for arable and urbanisation purposes, the author uses the apparent fact of the rapid conversion of a large amount of land to urban purposes in China, as a way of raising danger signals for us in India, where there is a far higher proportion of arable land (60%). Equally, he attempts to develop an argument which says that cities as they are today taking shape, 'give no place for nature' (p. 19 onwards).

As arguments, these are necessary; but in order to make these points the author singles out only residential space as the culprit for urban sprawl (by giving figures only for the proportion of urban areas devoted to residential purposes), and not institutional, industrial, or badly utilised transport space (like disused railway land), let alone space kept for 'defence' activities. So, once again, it is 'people' who are presented as the problem. Nor does he go beyond looking at land use, energy consumed and waste produced (which he looks at passingly, elsewhere in the book). Industry proportionately contributes far more and is at least an equal if not worse contributor to the wasting of the environment. Thus the social and economic compulsions that ordinary people are under, often what lead to their playing 'a negative role', are not taken into account.

In these terms also, there is a curious but perhaps significant ignoring in the monograph of all but alluvial land having 'environmental value' (p. 29 and elsewhere). Though

there is a passing mention at different points of the value of the wetlands of Bombay and Calcutta, the major message seems to be that agricultural lands must be 'saved' at any cost; and that as a consequence, 'marginal' lands can and should be used for urbanisation. Again, this hardly does justice to debates as to how 'value' is allocated and even more so, what role so-called 'marginal' 'degraded' or 'waste' land and environment plays in our ecosystem. The only counter-value Buch mentions directly is agricultural value; but is this enough? Or is the argument in fact saying more about the values the author holds, and which interests he is relating to? Choices certainly have to be made; but in a work like this it is surely necessary to lay out the full ground.

In this context, an accompanying claim that the author makes that '...we still have not developed the ability to quantify environmental cost' (p. 29), is again extraordinary, given the methodologies for environmental impact assessment that are now well-established.

All this indicates the need to critically view the monograph's claim to speak of or promote 'environmental consciousness'. Ultimately, this work is directly or indirectly addressed only to planners; what is more, in the vision of the author planners would seem to be the main instrumentality of planning. The 'environmental consciousness' part of the title therefore seems to be limited to inculcating this consciousness in planners. But in this day and age of growing consciousness and mobilisation in the country – among students, workers, dalits, women and the middle class, is this really enough, either in terms of instrumentality or audience? Or is the message that planning is something that should be left to the planners? This is a question that not just the reader but also the author and the editors of the series must reflect on.

It also needs to be said that the term 'consciousness' is itself a loaded one. In today's usage, the term implicitly connotes and invokes *democratic* consciousness. At the risk of over-simplification, it can be said that 'democratic consciousness' is generated through the experience of horizontal and vertical relationships. The entire paradigm of planning as developed in this book, however, is antithetical to this.

There are also a number of throw-away comments made which could well give cause for alarm, if one was to take them seriously. Two examples: '...A villager can do without paved roads...' (p. 36). 'In the matter of sanitation, even in the absence of latrines the open spaces around [villages] permits ground absorption of human excreta and solid waste which does not give rise to a problem of hygiene....' (p. 36).

For the first quote, is comment necessary? For the second, what about, for instance, the impact of this arrangement on the lives that women are forced to live in villages? Where women still have to go out to the fields and forests while it is still dark, at great personal risk, simply in order to seek some privacy? Are there no questions of 'consciousness' involved here?

It is impossible to complete this review without addressing the sadly outdated and limited manner in which the important subject of housing is handled in the monograph. The subject is listed, and passingly addressed, as just one of the many 'public services' that exist in or should be provided in cities, in a manner reminiscent of Planning Commission and other planning documents over the past many decades. One would have expected the author to have treated it very differently in 1993. Sadly, this is still the way that the subject tends to be approached by both the government and many non-governmental organisations.

Firstly, 'housing' in the Indian context, is not and has never been a 'service', and it perpetuates gross misunderstanding to treat it like this. In particular, the great majority of housing in cities – in India, as in all countries of the South – is built and provided by people for themselves, including the poor, and not by the state. Even in Delhi, with its large public house-building programme, the majority still have to fend for themselves.

The subject of 'housing' in fact just does not belong in the same family as water, sanitation, or electricity because it is not merely a service (like water or power). 'Housing for the poor' came to be included along with other public services during the growth of the welfare state in Europe, and the emerging socialist state; but it has now been realised, especially in the third world, that housing cannot be provided as a service. Even if large sections of Indian society need to be helped by the state, this is evidently not the kind of 'service' Buch has in mind. The 'partnership' (and conflict) between the public, private and community sectors that produces, maintains and renews housing (and that also displaces and de-houses people), is a complex equation undergoing tremendous stress and change at present, on account of the new economic policies in place. There is no hint of any of this, in this mongraph.

Secondly, 'housing activities' are an important way in which ordinary people participate in the environment and develop 'environmental consciousness' by making hard decisions about their own homes and dwelling environments. If housing is treated as a *process* of people gaining a place to live in security and dignity, it offers a tremendous potential for democratic, participatory planning and for developing better neighbourhoods and cities. This is not a new idea, yet there is no reference to this. In short, to treat housing as merely a service in this context, and to cover housing in urban India in a tract on urban planning and environmental consciousness so sketchily, is a great travesty. Much at the same level, lies yet another almost throw-away suggestion, of 'Why not small cities?' (p. 56).

For this reviewer then, this monograph is a failure at many levels, in substantive terms yet one which should be read with care. The picture that emerges from between the lines tells us more than just about the state of urban planning today.

Jai Sen

PUNJABI BAROQUE And Other Memories of Architecture by Gautam Bhatia. Penguin India, New Delhi, 1994.

SINCE its publication in mid-1994, *Punjabi Baroque* has been widely noticed in the Indian press. Most reviewers have been architects who have seen it as a more or less serious work on the state (or distaste?) of contemporary Indian urban architecture. Although a majority of them have enjoyed the book, a few have been disturbed by Bhatia's swipes at their profession. Not being an architect myself, I clearly see that more than the satire and lampooning, what has troubled them is Bhatia's style and manner of presentation.

It is the unique foregrounding of these aspects which leads me to think that there is another way of looking at the book. It is possible to regard *Punjabi Baroque* not only as an architectural critique by a practising architect but as a literary work by a writer who *happens* to be an architect. Somewhere along the line, the writer lurking inside the architect has got the better of the latter. The libidinous energy of Bhatia the writer is so overwhelming and unrestrained that the book is a veritable *tour de force*, an exuberant and idiosyncratic romp, an exaggerated and, at times, overdone performance which leaves the reader, in turn, dazzled, bemused, tickled, provoked, and in the end a bit saddened. A crisis in architecture has been diffused and deflected through a literary bypass: has the architect given up and the writer taken over?

Indeed, before I return to its literary aspects, let me summarise what the book is about. It is, first of all, a narrative, an account, a story if you will, of the author's experiences as an architect. Bhatia's main purpose in recounting it is to point out that most contemporary Indian architecture is a racket in which architects, more often than not, actively help clients delude themselves. That is, architecture – unlike what they teach in graduate school – is not the noble profession whereby creative, talented and committed professionals help design and build beautiful, healthy and happy habitats for the masses of a developing country, but a self-serving profession whose primary objective is to make money. Or, as Bhatia puts it, 'architecture exists only to provide meaningful occupation to architects.' This, actually, is the middle-ground; architecture can be worse, even more corrupt, degrading and cynical; or, in a very few cases, better – wherein the architect actually manages to do what he is educated and paid to do – that is, build a sane, aesthetically satisfying and relevant structure suited to the needs of land and people.

Bhatia makes his point by showing how intimately autobiographical buildings can be, revealing the owners' deepest fantasies and desires. That's how the 'DLF Brothers' wish to build a replica of Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's 18th century mansion, in their plot near Gurgaon. That's what gives rise to 'Punjabi Baroque', 'Spanish Hacienda', 'Bania Gothic', or 'Chandni Chowk Chippendale', 'Tamil Tiffany', 'Maratha Chauvinism', 'Bengali Asceticism', 'Akali Folly', 'Marwari Pragmatism', 'Bhaiyya Eclectic', 'Brahmin Medievalism', 'Parsi Propriety' and 'Anglo-Indian Rococo' and the like. These absurd and grotesque combinations, both funny and bizarre, actually reflect the sorry state of Indian architecture: 'Unconcerned with the earth and environment from which they have sprung, such houses spread out across the expanding suburbs, devouring valuable agricultural land, lending a certain self-conscious charm, and a flair for embarrassed gesture.'

Most of the rest of the book illustrates this basic thesis with various humorous accounts of the author's own challenging, baffling and exasperating encounters with various clients. There is a repetitive pattern to these stories: usually, what the clients desire is so preposterously impractical and silly that despite Bhatia's sincerest attempts to accommodate all their follies, the deals fall through. The reason is simple: somewhere along the way, Bhatia ends up acting as a mirror to these clients, exposing even without wishing to, their absurdities. Rather than admit this fact, the clients opt for the easier way – they change their architect.

Many other things happen in the book. There is a funny and clever dedication packed with irreverent allusions to great architects and the Epilogue is a wildly parodic and deconstructive fictive autobiography. Witty asides, jokes, snide remarks and gestures, neologisms and all manner of entertaining writing are there for the reader's savouring. All this makes *Punjabi Baroque* a little like the buildings it parodies – a postcolonial and postmodern *pot pourri* of several styles, genres, traditions, ideologies and manners of representation. Bhatia takes on a serious subject but immediately starts making fun of it and of himself and, by implication, of all serious intellectual endeavour itself in these confusing times. It is as if Bhatia has clearly seen and defined his professional anger but, unable to find his way out of it, resorts to a sort of clowning as a coping device.

Without question, Bhatia's education and values have alienated him from his client. He often portrays him as a mysterious and incomprehensible 'Other' whose motives and priorities are alien and bizarre. In fact, the entire context in which he functions – postcolonial India – itself becomes an unreal and fantastic place, almost like a magic-realist landscape, full of grotesque and unfathomable shapes. Bhatia himself knows that Mahatma Gandhi, to name just one key figure from recent history, showed us how to harness these alienating advantages in the service of the common people of India. The Gandhian architect, Laurie Baker, has been Bhatia's hero. Then why has Bhatia, like several of us modern Indian intellectuals and professionals, failed to make that ennobling and emancipating connection which will free us from our alienation from India and enable us to live and work meaningfully here?

Makarand Paranjape

EICHER CITY MAP: Delhi. Eicher Goodearth Limited, New Delhi, 1996.

HERE at last is a map of Delhi that is at par with classics like the London A-Z. Designed to serve the residents of Delhi and its satellite townships, it provides you with an alternative to stopping and asking for directions to a place nobody can lead you to.

For too long have confused tourists and foreigners been maddened by the inadequacy of good city maps: what passed off so far as a 'map' was the junk sold on pavements, of whose design quality or information quotient the less said the better. The result was that the hapless victim surrendered tamely to the vicious hustler on the street, the cheating cab driver or the equally notorious auto driver. From the time of its publication, this handy volume has become such a vital accessory, rumours say it will soon displace the *Jai Jagdish Hare* car horns and *dhinchuk* stereos as top of the line stuff.

The first part is an illustrated guide to Delhi's history, environment and major landmarks. A helpful glossary provides information on common Indian words like the *loo* to those tourists who have ventured here without knowing something of its vicious summers and to whom the word may mean something else altogether. There is a thoughtful article on the state of the city's environment which is aimed at sensitizing the phantom *paan*-spitting, pee-happy monster we have always wanted to catch and nail. Having got all that done in the pro-rogue (an irresistible pun), we come to the most important section: 'How to use this book'.

Unfortunately, this is the section that many users tend to overlook in their hurry to reach their destination. The scenario that follows is then roughly this: wife reading map inside the car to a husband who is being lavishly cursed by the line of tooting cars behind him for holding up traffic on (say) the Ring Road. If you pass them close enough, you can hear their conversation: 'Why couldn't you have brought your glasses if the print is too small?'; 'That is why I tell you to carry a torch in the glove compartment...' to the final wail: 'Where are we?' Never, therefore, move without first studying the map at home: the minutes you lose then are better then the hours you are likely to later to say nothing of the stress it may place on personal relationships. 'Major marital rows stem from the small print in road maps' – old American saying.

What the success of this publication has proved is that there is a crying need for good road maps for all our metros. And even more, a need for handy, tourist-friendly series on monuments, walks and other such popular activities. Having provided its residents with the definitive road map, perhaps Eicher should now work on a publication designed to help visitors discover the perennial but hidden charms of this great city.

Ira Pande

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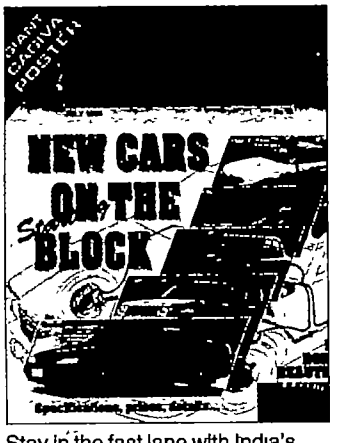

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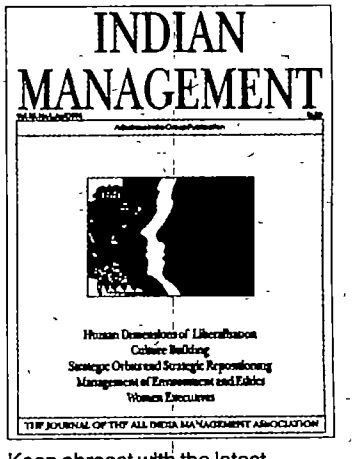

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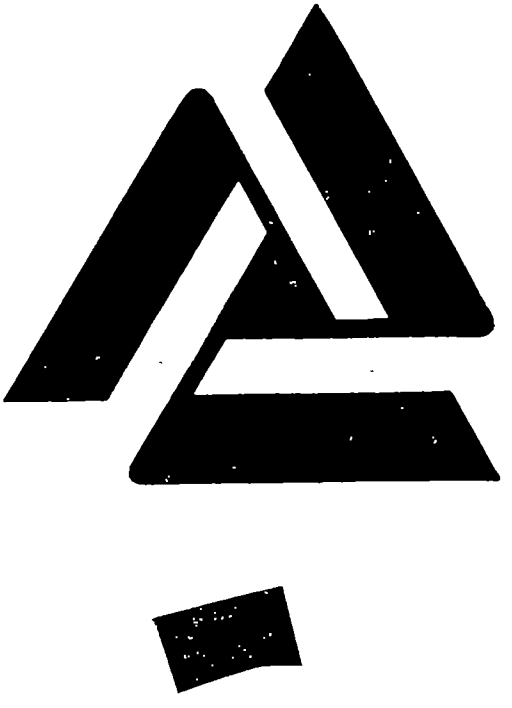

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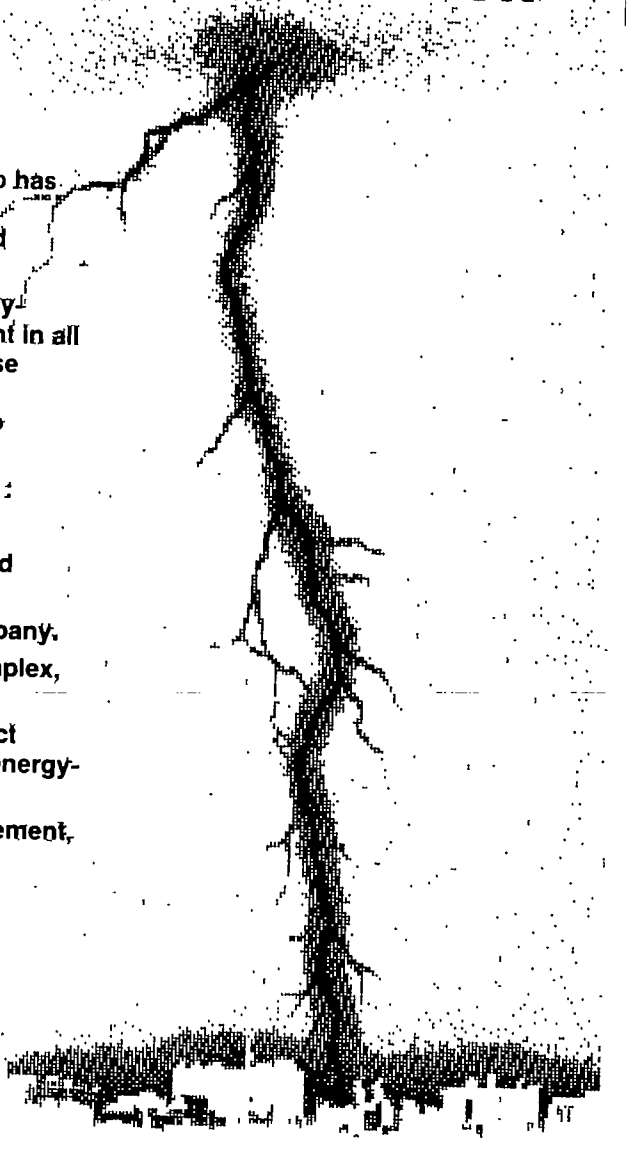

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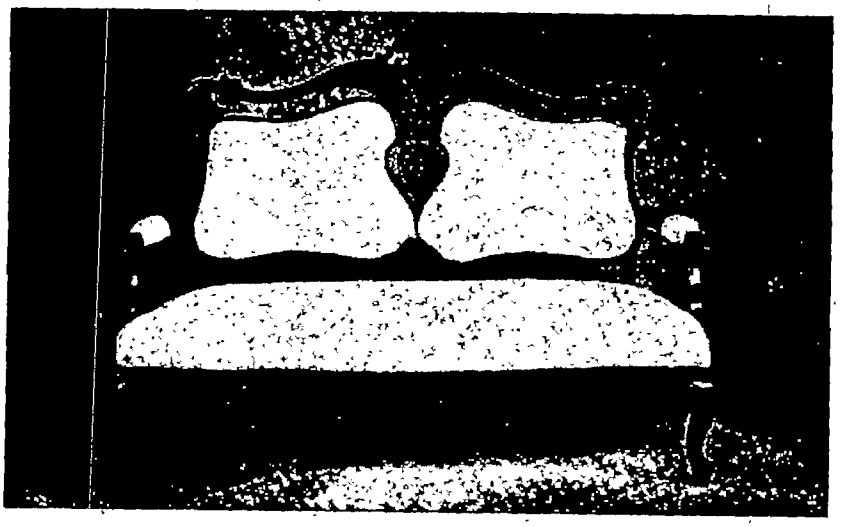

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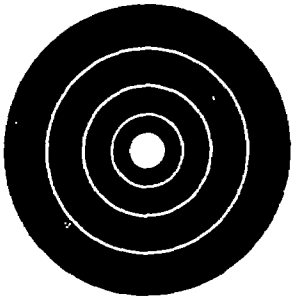

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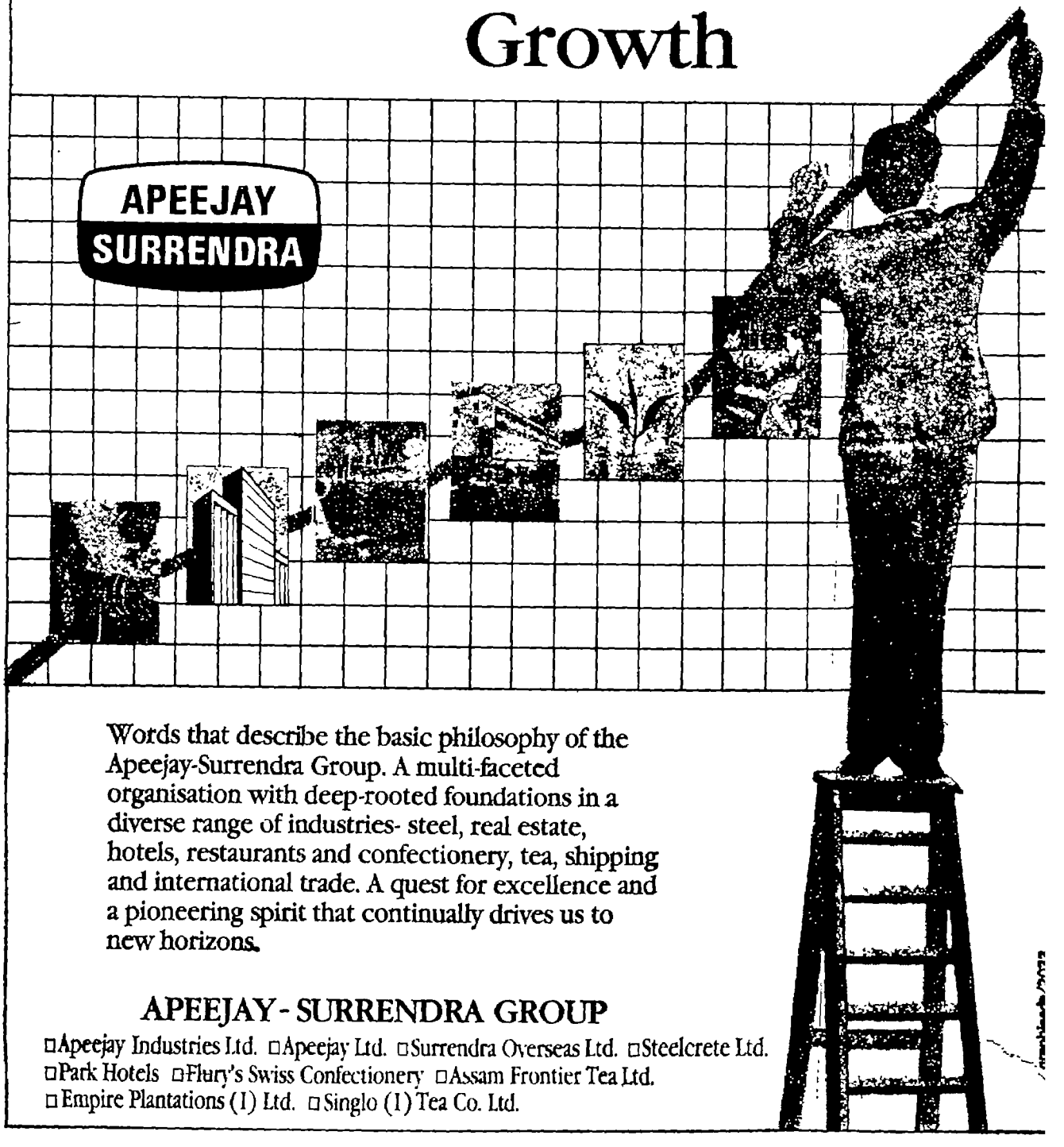

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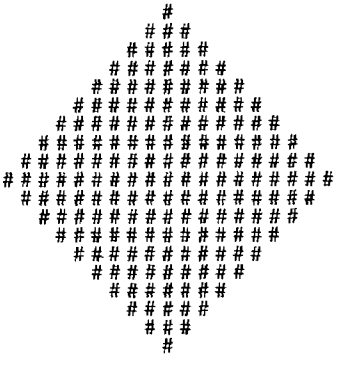

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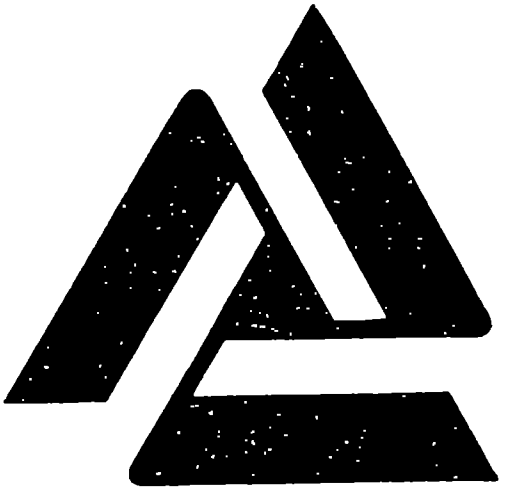

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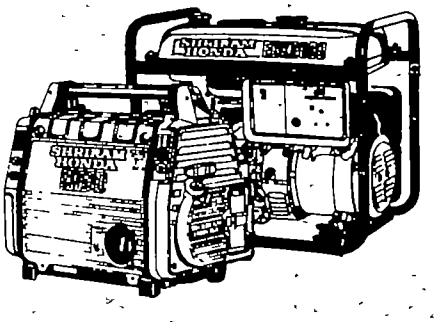

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The problem

RECENTLY an economist friend remarked, 'What is this cultural studies that you people do? Why is it so obscure?' Coming from the practitioner of a discipline which boasts the highest level of formalisation and abstractness among the social sciences, the irony was transparent. Here was the don of a highly formalised discipline asking why the analysts of culture were moving away from a commonsense understanding. Underlying the question, however, was another kind of anxiety which is pervasive. After all, isn't culture what we are all involved in as members of society, so should it not be universally comprehensible? What is the need for theorising culture? What is glossed in this view is that there can be different levels of understanding culture and while they need not be mutually exclusive, they remain distinct. Is this why Claude Levi-Strauss spoke of the unconscious models in society being more accessible to outside observers than to participants?

In India, culture is an old buzzword signifying its uniqueness as a civilisation. Often this has meant that it was characterised as a passive, unchanging 'other' to Europe's modernity.[1] While the anthropomorphising of the developing countries was an epistemic means of locating the post-colonial states in the periphery of the Three Worlds Order,[2] the margins of the world system, in turn, increasingly became assertive of their identity and difference from the metropole. In a situation of economic homogenisation under global capitalism, cultural resilience became the 'weapon of the weak'.[3] Culture, designated as the essence of underdevelopment in theories of modernisation became a source of resistance to economic transgression and afforded linkages with alternative practices in the metropolis itself.

Discussions of culture in India are invariably about aspects of high culture and tradition. Their lineage derives from the Arnoldian conception of culture as 'the best which has been thought and said in the world'.[4] Culture thus remains an attribute of the cognoscenti, a mark of cultivation to be desired more for its absence in others. A scarce resource unequally distributed but posited as a seamless continuity, it is severed both from the masses as well as the present. Contemporaneity is ascribed as callowness. Writing in this vein about a recently held workshop on 'Globalisation: Culture and Society' in New Delhi, a commentator observed, 'What really is the socio-cultural

1 Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India*, Oxford, 1989; Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament*, Philadelphia, 1993

2 Carl Pletsch, 'The three worlds, or the division of social scientific labour, circa 1950-75', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23(4), October 1981, 565-90

3 James Scott, *The Weapons of the Weak*, New Haven, 1985.

4 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, Cambridge, 1932

heritage that people in this country are so worked up about most of the time? It is doubtful if their concern is the Vedas, Upanishads and other ancient philosophical and literary texts'.[5] Or take another lament, 'Because of the encounter of cultures – an encounter in which the modernity of the West emerges as the dominant voice – we are losing our traditional/cultural ideals'.[6] The association of culture with tradition and heritage effaces the potentialities of the present and denudes it of cultural reinvention. There is little space for the 'popular' in such a conceptualisation of culture.

Yet popular culture engulfs people. Excluded from the ambit of (high) culture the masses are perceived as wallowing in the banal. Working with an expanded notion of culture, cultural studies incorporates 'poetry with popcorn advertisements' through a 'procedural equalization' as bearers of social meaning. As Mulhern has pointed out recently, 'Cultural studies did not merely extend the range and social sensibility of kulturkritik, it set out to challenge the whole system of values that support the older tradition, a whole system of cultural *authority*, and to explore, if not quite establish, the forms of an *alternative* authority'.[7]

This extended concept of culture came from cultural anthropology, while its usage in cultural studies mutated against the constrictions of the anthropological notion. Tylor's encompassing enumeration of 'Culture...is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society',[8] led to an objectified and holistic representation. Even a less omnibus definition like Geertz's of culture as 'webs of significance (man) himself has spun',[9] could not escape the sense of a constructed whole. As a meaning imparting phenomenon, culture had already become. In contrast Daniel posits, 'The desire to find culture, either as present reality or as a deferred ideal, to find it in any case as a coherent whole, true and beautiful, is the desire to find a corpse'.[10] It is this deadening fixity which cultural studies has sought to subvert by addressing questions of difference, heterogeneity and conflict.

Cultural studies has its originary narrative: 'The broad rubric, involving the study of culture, has been loosely affixed to many kinds of enterprises, but it is the Centre for

5 Rakshat Pun, 'Self-reliance in culture', *The Hindustan Times*, 12 April 1995

6 Avijit Pathak, 'Thoughts on cultural invasion', *Mainstream* 33(12), 11 February 1995

7. Francis Mulhern, 'The politics of cultural studies', *Monthly Review* 47(3), July-August 1995, 33

8 Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, New York, 1878/1974.

9 Clifford Geertz, 'Thick description. toward an interpretive theory of culture', in his *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, 1973, 5.

10 E Valentine Daniel, *Is There a Counterpoint to Culture?* Amsterdam, The Wertheim Lecture, 1991, 7

Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham that adopted, constructed and formalized the term cultural studies as a name for its own unique project'.[11] Emanating from the cultural criticism of Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart as well as the Communist Party Historians' Group, especially E.P Thompson, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, British cultural studies sought to recuperate the 'culture of the people' in terms of working class language, beliefs, values, family life, gender relations, rituals and other working class institutions like sporting events and pubs, while recording the loss of that culture as American popular culture spread through Britain.[12]

Any account of the CCCS has to recognise the multiple struggles waged within its fold. On the one hand the critique of empiricism led to the increasing induction of European critical social theory, on the other the marginalised working groups on women and race fought back to register their presence. They left an indelible imprint on the cultural studies literature. As cultural studies crossed the Atlantic, gender and race came to occupy centre-stage in U.S. productions. The debates in Britain resonated to form a new language of criticism with scant respect for academic disciplines but informed by continental social theory.

The question of interdisciplinarity is exemplified by its relation to social anthropology in Britain, especially in regard to Paul Willis's work *Learning to Labour* (1977) As part of the working group interested in studying the life experiences of working class youth, Willis, along with others had to reinvent anthropology for their purpose Ironically, the tradition of British social anthropology was strong and distinguished. Structural-functionalism was the reigning paradigm valorising institutional structures, norms of functioning, order and holistic analysis. This was to be carried out through fieldwork or participant observation of 'other cultures', usually in pre-industrial societies As a result, British social anthropology was primarily outward oriented, directed more towards an examination of discrete communities in the colonies than to industrial ones at home. Moreover, anthropological theory ignored the question of power and change in this objectification of the 'primitive' other.

Such underpinnings were not conducive to the study of the life experiences of working class youths in Britain. So Willis and his compatriots had to fashion their own urban ethnography as they engaged with youth sub-cultures. While this led to an understanding of the fragmentation which existed among these sub-cultures, it also underscored the nature of lifestyle as resistance among chronically unemployed youth. Clearly, culture could no longer be conceived as a bounded entity but was constitutive of a way of life, constantly changing and always in the process of becoming. The language, habits and rituals of working class youths marked out their autonomous domain and their identity.

Since that brush with anthropology, cultural studies has come a long way. Its appropriation of the concept of culture from the former has meant a reciprocal transformation Anthropologists can no longer study 'culture as an objectified thing or as a self-enclosed, coherent, patterned field of meaning', as the mediating processes through which meanings are selected and organised are arranged unequally and do not elicit the same meaning for all [13] In this way the power dimension of culture has been made manifest in anthropology, even as cultural diversity and multiculturalism in the North had been eroded by the overwhelming culture of consumption.

Apart from interdisciplinarity and a sense of the political, cultural studies has been implicated with the contemporary as articulation of modernity. This has called for an understanding of lived experiences and patterns of everyday life as consciousness and conditions of subjectivity. As Richard Johnson observes, 'cultural studies is about historical forms of consciousness or subjectivity, or the subjective forms we live by' [14] Both consciousness and subjectivity signify an act of self-production, an intervention on the part of the actor Culture therefore is a social product, a consequence of collective action, through which cultural subjects are produced within a temporal space. In effect cultural studies celebrates the actor's view.

In the course of its diasporic dissemination, cultural studies has travelled across the Atlantic to North America and to other parts of the world including Australia, Southeast Asia and to India In the process it has acquired institutional form as a discipline with its graduate programmes, network of conferences and specialised publishing houses. Routinisation in the North American context has also meant a strenuous effort to mediate postmodernist theories in reckoning with the 'New Times'. This has led to a rejection of universalist reason and totalistic theories in favour of the 'fragment'. It has also implied the dissolution of foundational concepts like 'class', 'revolution', 'progress' and so on, which claimed an objective presence outside discourse Released from the rigour of metanarratives and truth, cultural studies has focused on difference, identity, autonomy, heterogeneity, governmentality, among others, as discursive conduits for local initiatives and actor orientation. The effort is to indicate how truth effects are produced. Accordingly, people act on behalf of themselves, not according to predetermined schemas of action, in order to fulfil their contingent and limited goals. Action thus emanates from a recognition of one's subjectivity

Critics of the postmodern turn in cultural studies decry its institutionalisation and the reneging of its promise

11. L Grossberg, C Nelson and P. Treichler (eds), *Cultural Studies*. London, 1992, 9

12 Op cit

13 Renato Rosaldo, 'Whose cultural studies?' *American Anthropologist* 96(3), September 1994

14 Richard Johnson, 'What is cultural studies anyway?' *Social Text* 16. 1986, 43

of emancipating the downtrodden The voluntarism implicit in cultural action has been considered antithetical to societal transformation Hence even acknowledging its attempt 'to further emancipatory social aims', critics maintain that the emphasis on the 'popular' has led to a subsumption of politics into culture. The supercession of traditional left politics which a cultural studies perspective has advocated, in turn has earned it epithets like populist and pluralist. In his critique of cultural studies Mulhern notes, 'the analysis of popular culture does not merely enhance political understanding, but in some sense invalidates and supersedes the inherited political tradition of the left'.[15]

The arrival of cultural studies in India, largely outside the institutional fold, holds the promise of engaging in a critique of naturalised ideologies, universalist theories and theorising fragmentary resistance. Consequently, ideas like 'modernity' and 'nation' have come under scrutiny. In the Indian context these are not discrete forms as the history of one implies the other It has prompted Niranjana to remark, 'Nationalism was a marker of the readiness to enter the "modern" age, and the modern person produced as "Indian" was also the free, agentive, romantic subject of liberal humanism'.[16] While the modernity of the nation is scarcely acknowledged, the self-evident truth of its presence from ancient times is rarely questioned. Recognition of the nation as a relatively recent construct, a counterpoint to imperial imaginings, opens up the possibility of examining how the idea of the nation became hegemonic

Even early commentators of the post-colonial condition in India were not unaware of the fragility of the national subject. Commenting on the spurious nature of the middle class, the primary mediators of nationalism, Mukherji wrote, 'It once performed certain functions. Now it has none Its mobility has increased but it has not burst its bonds Its social distance from the masses is wide, and getting wider with every creation of new interests intended to act as sops to frustration'.[17] It is this hiatus which constitutes the 'historic failure of the nation to come into its own'[18] at its moment of arrival.

The course of this failure has been variously mapped. Nandy has argued that nationalism as a modern ideology initiated an internalisation of the West's 'secular hierarchies' and brought about a 'loss of self' among the nationalist elite. Nationalism was a 'homogenised universalism, itself a product of the uprootedness and deculturation brought about by British colonialism in India'.[19] It spawned an estranged elite unable to speak for the people.

A different trajectory of nationalist thought has been charted by Chatterjee who characterises nationalism as 'derivative discourse' Highlighting the western roots of the apparatuses of knowledge underpinning nationalism, he goes on to elaborate how through a devious route the bourgeoisie was able to imprint its ideas upon the body politic and sought to create a state in its own image.[20]

The failure of the nation to carry out its project of modernity encompassing the masses in an articulation of the 'national-popular', has meant that large sections have remained outside its ambit. In recent times this has been further aggravated by the introduction of market-driven reforms. Even as the desire for consumption has become widespread and the language of political participation, elections and human rights familiar to previously excluded and oppressed constituencies like dalits, tribals and women, opportunities of fulfilment have not expanded commensurately. Instead, under the supremacy of the market, citizenship has been restricted to a nation within a nation or those who can consume. This has fuelled widespread discontent though its manifestation has not necessarily been in party politics. Strategies of local activism, grassroots action and individual negotiation have often been adopted.

Disillusionment with party structures and the rhetoric of mega-changes has led to a focus on micro-politics. At the level of everyday life individuals and groups are constantly engaged in negotiation with the dominant discourses in order to make choices which could empower themselves within the given situation. It is this politics of resistance rather than the politics of transformation which presently represents people's will.

By opening up spaces for critiques of dominant ideologies as well as for counter imaginings of power, cultural studies affords a site of ideological contestation. In a situation of constructed temporality, creation of autonomous identity is a feature of empowerment for those long denied a voice Identity is a means of exercising power through self representation. It includes facets of cultural self expression like art, literature, theatre, cinema and the performative arts along with political, economic and epistemic dimensions. The preceding discussion of the nation and modernity is then hardly exhaustive of the gamut of cultural studies.[21]

The proliferation of local activism holds the key to a counter hegemonic discourse. Theorising such practices could well be a task of cultural studies in India. That would mark a shift in the meaning of culture from a 'whole way of life'[22] to a 'whole way of struggle'.[23]

ANJAN GHOSH

15 Mulhern, op cit

16 Tejaswini Niranjana, 'Introduction careers of modernity', *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, 25-26, December 1993, 1

17 D P Mukherji, *Sociology of Indian Culture*, Jaipur, 1947/1978, 214

18 Ranajit Guha, 'On some aspects of historiography of colonial India', in R. Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies* I, New Delhi, 1982, 7

19 Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*, New Delhi, 1994

20 Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, New Delhi, 1986

21 For the cultural aspects of, T Niranjana, P. Sudhir and V Dhareshwar (eds), *Interrogating Modernity*, Calcutta, 1993

22 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, Harmondsworth, 1958

23 E P Thompson, 'The long revolution', *New Left Review* 9, May-June, 1961, 33

Anti anti-economism

SATISH DESHPANDE

TODAY, the disparate field of cultural studies has become important enough in western academia to claim that it would have to be invented if it did not already exist. Given that it does not yet exist in Indian academia, do we need to – should we – try to reinvent it here? I say that we need not, and should not, do so.

I say this even though 'culture' is at the centre of my own professional concerns, and though I have been strongly influenced by cultural studies and have great respect for some of its practitioners. For the past four years, I have also been teaching a course on the sociology of culture that draws heavily on this tradition. However, I believe that though we should continue to learn from it and to teach it in our classrooms, we need not *institutionalise* cultural studies here because our context does not require it. In fact, I would go even further: institutionalising it in our intellectual and academic environment may run the risk of converting a potential asset into a liability.

In the Anglo-American academy, cultural studies has functioned mainly as a banner for rallying a set of loosely linked, broadly left wing perspectives emanating mainly from the humanities, communication and media studies. The specificities of its British, and particularly its American, intellectual and institutional context have so far allowed cultural studies to play a largely positive ro Thus, it has offered an institutior umbrella for progressive tendencies the academy to resist or circumvent t considerable power of established dis plines, especially in the United Stat Given that the academe there is plac at a greater distance from the state a the public sphere, cultural studies h helped to push academic practice clo to the socio-political concerns of the d Moreover, despite its recent emerger as a successful 'funding category' (a f often used to sneer at it), the investm in cultural studies remains small relati to the vast edifice of the Anglo-Americ academy..

Most importantly, the ma political debates in which cultural st ies has been involved (for instance, debate on multiculturalism in the U USA) are located in the metropoli West where the target of attack is Anglo-American establishment. Giv the balance of forces, there is little d ger (despite the exaggerated fears chestrated by the right wing) that cultu studies will inadvertently damage a progressive values or institutions t may be part of this establishment.

On each of these counts, the Ind environment is decisively different. He the humanities and social science dis plines do not wield power in the sa way; nor are they likely to be able to pol

* A word about the title It is adapted from Clifford Geertz's well-known essay 'Anti anti-relativism', where he says he thought of it via an analogy with the 'anti anti-communism' position of the McCarthy era Like him, I too refuse 'the law of the double negative' – that I oppose certain kinds of anti-economism does not mean that I wish to defend 'economism', which in any case is not to marx what relativism is to anthropology (Geertz 19 Asked to write on 'the critique of culturalism', I h understated the achievements of cultural studie the hope that other contributors will emphas them

their boundaries in order to thwart innovative initiatives. Whatever the worth of its actual offerings, the academy is less insolated from the public sphere in a country like India where its links with the state are also much stronger. In a poor country the resources needed to establish cultural studies as yet another quasi-disciplinary entity would be much greater in relative terms, and would have many (equally deserving) alternative uses. The crucial argument, however, is that in our current context – that of a crisis-ridden subaltern nation undergoing 'globalisation' – an institutionalised cultural studies may strengthen certain disabling tendencies in academia.

The most damaging of these might be called 'culturalism', which I am using as a convenient label for a broad tendency in contemporary social theory given to an uncritical celebration of 'culture'. While there are many varieties of culturalism, the one that is likely to matter most in the Indian context is anti-economism. The characteristic features of culturalism as anti-economism are its privileging of insufficiently theorised concepts of culture and the cultural, coupled with its marked reluctance to deal with areas of enquiry that are close to the economy.

But is it not perverse to judge cultural studies by the criterion of how well it is able to handle questions related to the *economy*? Moreover, is it not premature to worry – before the fact – that Indian cultural studies might become a discipline prone to culturalism? If it really does entail these risks then why bother with it even in its un-institutionalised forms? To answer these questions it is necessary to turn to a more detailed account of where cultural studies has come from, how it has functioned in practice, and what its relation to culturalism as anti-economism has been elsewhere, and might be in India.

While cultural studies is clearly a very uneven and disparate field, there is some truth to the simplistic classroom formula which describes it as the product of the union of post-structuralism and neo-marxism. As a composite attempt to sublimate the varied anxieties of these two schools of thought, cultural studies tries to simultaneously overcome the political barrenness of post-structuralism as well as the theoretical inability of neo-marxism to redesign its research agendas. It lays claim – via a rather elastic concept of 'culture' – to an unlimited expanse of subject matter, and refuses to be defined in conventional terms based on discipline, perspective, or methodology. Nevertheless, its practitioners have offered three marks of identification: first, cultural studies *politicizes its objects of enquiry* by scrupulously foregrounding the power relations that constitute or traverse these objects; second, it *transcends disciplinary divisions*, typically adopting an inter-disciplinary (and sometimes an anti-disciplinary) stance; and third, cultural studies is *rigorously self-reflexive*, refusing to exempt its own practice from the critical gaze that it directs at its objects.[1]

These distinguishing features are also, of course, claims, and – at least in the best work done in cultural studies – they are legitimate claims. But the problem is that each also harbours its evil twin. Thus, the claim that cultural studies politicizes its object can turn into its opposite, namely the political legitimation of business-as-usual in certain sectors of the academe. The avowal of inter-disciplinarity can be deftly transformed into assertion of authority without rigour or accountability. Finally, the affirmation of self-reflexivity can degenerate into solipsism, or worse, collective narcissism. It is partly (but only partly) because of these corruptions that the label 'cultural studies' has now also become an epithet, a handy brush with which to tar opponents.

The importance of the economy for cultural studies derives in the first instance from its insistence on looking at 'culture' from the point of view of politics and power relations. After all, this is what sets apart cultural studies from all the other perspectives (such as anthropology or Arnoldian criticism) which have used the term for more than a century. And if the focus is on power, then the economy cannot be ignored for it is an important – though not the only – source and locus of vital power relations. But a crucial contextual feature which doubly underlines this for cultural studies in India is the centrality of the economy for the socio-cultural sphere. In modern India, economic ideas and institutions have also functioned as critical *cultural* variables: the pervasive influence (until very recently) of economic nationalism is only the most obvious manifestation.

If it is conceded that the interface between culture and economy should form an important part of the agenda for cultural studies, then this part can be further divided into two sections: the economic aspects of cultural phenomena, and the cultural aspects of economic phenomena. As far as the first is concerned, cultural studies has a reasonably good record, this being one of the first areas that it emphasized. Even here, however, there is considerable room for extension and improvement. The fact that its selection of subjects and especially methods is heavily influenced by the academic disciplines where it first found shelter has sometimes made it appear that cultural studies is really nothing more than literary criticism, film studies or cultural anthropology 'by other means'. This tends to inhibit cultural studies from pursuing the economic aspects far enough, underlining thereby the unevenness of its efforts at bringing about academic interdisciplinarity.[2]

A much more serious charge, especially from an Indian point of view, is that cultural studies has been unable or unwilling to address *the cultural aspects of economic phenomena.* The reasons for this have to be sought in the recent history of western marxism and the specific role played by anti-economism.

1 See the Introduction to the flagship volume edited by Grossberg, Nelson and Treichler (1992), and also the contributions by Hall and Morris to the same volume

2 For example, it is only rarely that film or literary criticism (of the cultural studies type) devotes equal analytical effort to the industrial-financial aspects of film or publishing

Generally speaking, economism is a pejorative term referring to the two-fold tendency within orthodox marxist theory which (*a*) treats the economy as always and directly determining what happens in society, politics or culture; and (*b*) explains non-economic phenomena by reducing them to economic phenomena. While the orthodoxy denied the very existence of economism (arguing that it was simply the incorrect application of correct marxist theory), revisionist efforts to overcome this problem brought about a remarkable revival in western marxism. The initial focus on the *relationship between* the economic and the socio-cultural spheres led to a re thinking of the role of the former as always and automatically dominant. While this solved part of the problem, it opened the door to an apartheid-like analysis which focused on its chosen (economic or non-economic) domain while effectively ignoring the other. Ironically, amidst the efforts to rescue the socio-cultural sphere from its derivative status, the economic sphere itself remained under-theorised.

As Raymond Williams (1977:81-2) pointed out, an effective break with economism requires us to go beyond the question of the relationship between the economic and the non-economic to focus on the *content* of the economic sphere itself. We must break out of the habit of thinking of 'the economy' as though it were some *thing* or *place,* we must remember that for Marx, 'the economy' was fundamentally a *set of social processes and activities* involving (either directly or indirectly) all of society. Thinking in this way helps us to avoid confusing abstract categories with representations of concrete reality; it makes it obvious, moreover, that social, cultural or political considerations are also internal to the economy.

Unfortunately (but not entirely unexpectedly), these theoretical insights have proved very difficult to translate into academic practice. The sanction given to anti-economism has sometimes been treated as a blank cheque As Stuart Hall puts it, the initial anti-economic assertion, namely that there need be 'no necessary correspondence' between the economy and non-economic phenomena, has seemed to give way to the assertion of 'necessarily no correspondence' (Hall 1985 94) The shift from traditional concepts such as exploitation to new ones such as power has been ambiguous: while power certainly opens up a rich array of hitherto unavailable possibilities, it can also facilitate the legitimation of conservative positions. The overall effect is to make room for easy options which evade the difficult questions and take refuge in an intricate web of sophisticated theory The essential tension that marks any worthwhile theoretical endeavour is dissipated – 'theory lets us off the hook' (Hall 1992:285).

Two aspects of the contemporary Indian scene create a paradoxical situation where both the need for, and the dangers of, cultural studies are magnified. The first is the fact that issues and problems of an undeniably 'extra-economic' nature (communalism, caste, ethnicity...) have dominated the public sphere in the last decade, thus creating a space for the other social sciences to (re)emerge from the shadow of economics. The unprecedented receptivity to 'culture' and allied concepts may tempt the non-economics social sciences to re-establish autonomous disciplinary domains that, in a legitimate effort to refuse the domination of economics, end up excluding the economic sphere altogether. If it is institutionalised in its existing form, the field of cultural studies is likely to aid and abet such a process.

The second aspect is the New Economic Policy and its decisive break with the Nehruvian era, which has made visible the ways in which the economy was central to Indian national culture, but is concealing the ways in which it continues to be important. One of the contradictions of 'globalisation' is the *naturalisation* of the economy – its transformation from a realm of social policy into something that is governed by 'the market', which is thought of as being akin to a natural phenomenon Thus, whi marketisation implies that the economis economy relation is now much closer the meteorologist-weather relation rath than the doctor-patient relation, the di cipline of economics continues to deri its social prestige and authority from tl latter model.[3]

This makes it unlikely that the will be any worthwhile contributi from economics or political econon towards investigating the interfa between economy and culture The insi tutional security of economics lead *ceteris paribus*, to epistemological cor placency; there is little internal pressu on economists to step beyond their fiel Only sustained and effective provocati from others will prompt economists respond; and it is this provocation th cultural studies should – but, in its curre state, may not – help to produce.

Let me take an example. Econ mists critical of the new economic poli often insist that the market is not a mag cal device but a social institution. Ho ever, this is rarely followed up with account of the complex and many-layer social process that has been at work sin the eighties to bring 'the market' in being. To take only its most visible aspe the entry of multinationals in the luxu and consumer durables markets h involved a parallel process of trainir middle and upper class Indians to becon good globalised consumers This proce of creating, sustaining and legitimising new set of needs includes such practic as the 'Indianization' of products, tl socio-cultural and economic undercutti of local alternatives; or promotion campaigns based on detailed analysis demographic, social and cultural trenc There is rich material here for a mul disciplinary study of contemporary co sumption that would fall squarely with the cultural studies agenda. But given tl way things are today, all we are likely get are a few readings of advertisemen

3. Since this is an argument about the nature of t ideologies within which disciplines are embedde it does not matter for my purposes whether this vie of the market is itself true or false

•om cultural studies, or some industry-vel analyses from economists.

The specific kind of interdisciplinary ractice that has marked cultural studies ıay also encourage bad anti-economism) crowd-out the good kind. By and large, ertain disciplines and methods (such as olitical economy or survey methods) ave been avoided, while others (such as ıistory or critical readings) have been rivileged. This has meant, for example, hat the sign of 'culture' enables critics rom, say, literature or history to confi-lently tackle subjects like caste or the state vithout feeling constrained by the vast :orpus of material in sociology or politi-:al science; but a similar confidence is ıot in evidence with subjects equally menable to cultural analysis like class ır the market.

The willingness to cross disciplin-ıry boundaries is to be welcomed, and has usually been a source of strength and ınnovation in cultural studies. But the downside of such unevenness is the subtle way in which 'the roads not taken' have their authority underwritten or undermined, or (sometimes) both simultaneously. Worst of all, it identifies cultural studies exclusively with particular disciplines, theories and methods, which may ultimately negate the benefits of interdisciplinarity. The crucial lesson to be learnt from their history is that interdisciplinary fields are by nature unstable – they usually tend to crystallise into new disciplines (demography, communications, econometrics); and when they don't, it is because interdisciplinary work is being done from within, and on behalf of, *particular disciplines.*

To become a quasi-discipline, cultural studies in India will have to negotiate the pushes from its competitors as well as the pulls from the disciplines it is already involved with; both are likely to take it further away from the socio-economic sphere.[4] It would be desirable, therefore, if cultural studies were to stimulate interdisciplinary work within already existing disciplines rather than becoming a distinct discipline itself. This means that practitioners of cultural studies will have to cultivate not only the commitment to engage in conversations across disciplines, but also the added tenacity to make them happen despite initial resistance. Such a commitment implies a willingness to expend the time and effort needed to make the acquaintance of other disciplines: conversations cannot be started by refusing to engage with others' concerns, no matter how critical or oppositional this engagement may be.

It has been said of cultural studies that the moment of its institutionalisation is also a moment of danger (Hall 1992:285). It may be particularly appropriate to reflect on this danger today, when the label is just beginning to enter academic-intellectual discourse in India, both by being claimed as a desirable self-description, and by being imposed as a pejorative epithet on opponents. As I have tried to show, the label itself is unlikely to perform the useful functions here that it has in the West. At the same time, the best work in cultural studies can certainly act as a catalyst for promoting socially relevant and politically engaged research in our humanities and social sciences. It is precisely to protect the progressive impulse at the heart of cultural studies that I argue against giving it any formal shape. We need the inspiration, not the institution.

4 I have in mind the numerous development studies centres set up all over the country during the seventies. Overwhelmingly dominated by economics, they represent one end of the spectrum that cultural studies will be competing with in its struggle for scarce resources. At the other end would be the pull exerted by literature, media studies or history as disciplines which cultural studies has already been involved with.

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Valorizing the present

VIVEK DHARESHWAR

LET us begin with an act of renaming: let the field that we have come to know as Cultural Studies henceforth be renamed Political Studies or New Political Studies. To the question of what one hopes to accomplish by this, the answer will be set out as a programmatic outline of the agenda of New Political Studies

To set that agenda in the broadest possible terms: valorizing the present. In what language – what political language – do we valorize the present? What does it mean to valorize the present? This is not as simple as it may appear, for the question of our present – of our time – has not yet been posed, let alone thematized.[1] Here then is the proposition that I want to argue: *Our present is the difference between western theories of ourselves (of which our existing theories of ourselves are but an extension) and our metatheory of western theories (of which their theories of our part of the world are but a component)*. We will need to nuance and qualify this as we go along, but the project contained in that proposition is what I wish to outline.

The first half of the proposition should present no special problem of understanding. Whether we take our social system or cultural practices, the existing descriptions are generated by the West's attempt to understand and explain a world that they saw as distinctly different from their own. We have continued using those theories to describe ourselves, though not without intellectu discomfort or experiential distress. T result, unsurprisingly enough, has be that in a profound sense what we say a what we experience have either radical diverged from each other or enjoyed t most tenuous relationship.

This unhappy apprenticeship h lasted a long time; it is time now to a what we make of it. Most people wou have an intuitive understanding of th divergence and some may even think u an example or two articulating that int ition If that is so, then we are well on o way to discussing a collective projec For, paradoxical as it may seem at fir sight, the task of building a metatheo of western theories is part of the effort articulate theoretically that sense of dive gence. If you do not share my intuition holding, however implausibly, that eith the West has all the truth about itself well as us or that our tradition already h all the wisdom needed – then I hope least that you will want those convictio proved theoretically. The project I outli does not in any way prejudge the resu

Let us return to a closer examin tion of what the project involves. I sha discuss two sorts of examples to explica the two aspects of the task of building metatheory of western theories The fir involves looking at western theories they explicitly concern our part of t world Thanks to Balagangadhara's pat breaking work,[2] we are in a position see what can be accomplished in th direction. I shall then turn to the mor and political domain theorized by t West; this part may be sketchier than t first, although even here we can get o bearings from the way Balagangadha carries out his project.

Balagangadhara begins by puttin on trial the belief that all cultures hav

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* There is much in this essay that owes to conversations with Balagangadhara, although he is unlikely to entirely endorse what I say or how I say it

1 What I am setting out here can also be seen as an attempt to provide an abstract and systematic frame to both recapitulate and project forward the arguments I have developed in the following essays ' "Our Time" History, Sovereignty and Politics', *Economic and Political Weekly* 30(6), February 1995, 317-324, 'Postcolonial in the Postmodern; or, the Political After Modernity' 30(30), July 1995, pp 104-112, 'The Trial of Pagans', *Cultural Dynamics* 8(2), 1996; 'History and the Politics of Self-Description', paper presented at the conference on The Politics of History, Tulane University, New Orleans, 21-23 March 1996

2 S N Balagangadhara, *'The Heathen in His Blin ness ' Asia, the West and the Dynamic of Religio* E J Brill, Leiden, 1994 Further references to th work appear in the text

eligion. This belief is so common and a aken-for-granted assumption that it has ersisted even in the face of overwhelming evidence against it. The question erefore is: whence the belief and why t persists, albeit in different disguises. It s the belief of a culture whose identity is onstituted in important ways by religion. However, the theory of which this belief vas part has faded into the background making the belief – as well as many other problematics generated by that theory – the more or less unintelligible commonsense of this culture.

What makes this belief even more opaque (or should we say transparent?) is hat this culture now regards itself as embodying a secular world-view; when his culture turns to other cultures, it seeks o understand the latter too as embodying world-views. The secular theorists from this culture do not realize they are in essence doing and saying the same thing as the Christians: namely, understanding the 'Other' as a variation of themselves. How, then, does one explain the compulsion of this culture to understand the other only by transforming it? By explaining the nature of Christianity as a religion. To be religion is to have an explanatorily intelligible (EI) account of the Cosmos itself. To understand what this means is to understand why (in Nietzsche's phrase) Christianity was a stroke of genius.

Religion brings together the cause of the world and will of the Creator: it not only explains the Cosmos but also makes it and whatever happens in it intelligible to us. As Balagangadhara puts it:

> This, then, is what makes an explanation into a 'religious' explanation: it is knowledge of the Cosmos which includes itself as an *explanandum* There would have been a logical problem here, the threat of circularity perhaps, if this were to be a result of our (human) understanding or theory of the world. But this problem does not arise, because God has revealed His purpose by speaking to us about them. 'Revelation', then, is the crucial component that breaks the possible circularity. As religious figures would put it perhaps, religion need not prove the existence of God at all; the existence of religion is the proof for the existence of God. In this sense, as an explanatorily intelligible account, religion is God's gift to mankind and not a human invention (333).

This characterization of religion allows us to grasp the double dynamic of religion. As an EI account, religion has to claim universality, that is to say, it cannot be restricted by time, space or other cultures or traditions. It must universalize itself; it does so by proselytization and secularization. But this is also the dilemma – the Christological dilemma: Christianity as a religion must retain its identity as a religion; however, in order to universalize itself it is compelled to give up its identity, it is compelled to secularize itself. Since it claims to be *the truth,* it cannot restrict access to itself; but in order to retain its exclusivity it must hold on to its identity as a particular religion.

As religion, Christianity cannot *tolerate* the otherness of the other; when confronted with other 'pagan' traditions and practices (whether in late antiquity or only a few hundred years ago in the subcontinent), it must first transform the other into a religion, albeit a false one. It cannot acknowledge that there can be an other of religion. Christianity as a religion then brings a peculiar *reflexivity* into the world; it begins to predicate truth and falsity of *practices*. This is of course a category mistake, at least in the eyes of pagans, the practice-oriented peoples. The Christians, in contrast, are the theory-oriented people; it is belief that is important to them. They interrogate practices and traditions as embodying beliefs, albeit false ones. This 'fundamental' category mistake, however, lies at the origin of human history which Christianity begins to (re)write.

> The twin movements of Christianizing the pagan world and the de-Christianizing of Christian beliefs appear to help us understand what is 'really' going on: the secular world is itself under the grips of a religious framework (221).

What is really going on is that the distinction between the religious and the secular (between the sacred and the profane) is drawn *within* a theological framework, which has now become 'universal'.

This is a brutally short summary of Balagangadhara's main arguments; it nevertheless helps us to highlight the force and novelty of his account. At one level, we can see Balagangadhara's powerful 'conceptual story' correcting and deepening already existing descriptions and theories of western culture. Everybody knows that Christianity played a central role in the evolution of this culture; that modernity as a specifically western phenomenon introduced radical changes in the world. But in what way does Christianity constitute the identity of the West? How are the secular/liberal self-descriptions of the West related to Christianity? Where did the specifically modern phenomenon of reflexivity emerge from? The standard accounts would mobilize, variously and in various combinations, science, industrial capitalism, enlightenment, revolution and democracy as answer. To be sure, Balagangadhara's account leaves out many things, but we must remember that it is offered as a partial description of a culture against the background of another culture, the culture of the author.

Looked at from the point of view of the latter, the otherness of western culture consists precisely in its compulsion to transform the culture it studies into variation of itself. So Balagangadhara is able to explain not only why western theories look for religion in other cultures but also why their attempt to explain culture as embodying a 'world-view' is essentially secularization of a religious framework. In doing so, he is able to show the limits of an approach that looks at culture as a phenomenon to be explained, rather than as a *practice* to be learned, and his own account exhibits a different way of theorizing cultural difference.

If the West's attempt to understand the otherness of another culture ends up transforming the latter into variation of itself, and if the same attitude underlies its attempt to understand itself, how do

we make sense of its theories about the domains it regards as essential to itself?

With this question I come to the clarification of the second aspect of the project. I am now talking about theories – say moral or political – which emerged as a result of the West's attempt to understand its own experience but which impinge on us. This distinction between western theories about us and western theories about its own experiences that nevertheless impinge on us is a matter largely of expositional convenience rather than of any epistemic or qualitative importance. However, making that distinction will serve perhaps to highlight the scope and ambition of the project.

The West has generated theories about itself – about what it means to be a moral person, a citizen, what it is to have moral and political conflicts and how to go about resolving them and so forth. These theories have generated concepts – rights, sovereignty, autonomy, rationality – which in turn have generated further problems. These theories have been in conflict with one another about the way to formulate the problems as well as about the interpretation of the concepts used in the formulation and resolution of the problems. Thus the Kantians and the utilitarians disagree about morality and rationality; the liberals and communitarians disagree about political values; the hermeneuticians and the deconstructionists disagree about interpretation itself (about what it means to interpret a text or an action) and both of them disagree with the positivists Our task is not to join in these disputes or to choose what suits us (although that is what we have been doing during our long apprenticeship); instead, I am suggesting that we ask what these theories tell us about the West, about, to put it in the words of Wittgenstein, one its subtlest thinkers, how it goes on.

The thought is this: if we have to give an account of what, if anything, we have learned from the West, we can only do so not by simply repeating the contents of those theories but by specifying how we make sense of them If after the long apprenticeship with the West we now feel that what we say and experience are two different things, we have no immediate way of saying what it is in our experience that makes the theories we have used to describe ourselves unintelligible. We may have intuitions, even a sense of the practices, which allow us an initial distance; by themselves, however, they do not give us reasons for regarding western theories as inapplicable.

Our intuitions could be misleading, or entirely wrong. We need to begin to theorize those intuitions in order to generate concepts that can organize those intuitions into problematics to be developed, investigated and argued about. Because our apprenticeship has been both an obstacle and an enabling condition, our attempt to describe ourselves has to follow a two-fold movement: on the one hand, we must pick out the western theory that impinges on our conflicting intuitions and interrogate it for not what it says or could be made to say about our experience but how it constructs its domain in the West; on the other hand, that interrogation will be undertaken in order to clarify our experiential context, a clarification that should supply the heuristics for the theorization of that context.

An example or two might help. Consider the phenomenon or the institution called morality which by all accounts the West regards as central to its self-understanding. Whenever the West has turned to other cultures – whether cultures of classical antiquity (Greece and Rome) or of the subcontinent – it has claimed to distinguish itself from, and assert its superiority over, them by claiming that it alone possess what they lack, namely morality. This thing or institution involves a cluster of concepts a certain concept of the self as prior to experience, a concept of action as expression of the will, an absolute distinction between moral and non-moral motives and the related notion of autonomy and heteronomy, a concept of moral obligation as unconditional, a peculiar moral feeling called guilt, a special set of difficulties created by conflict of duties, a conception of blame and correlative voluntary action.

This cluster of concepts do impinge on us, sometimes directly b often indirectly. They are, however, n particularly intelligible to us (in this course western writers who noted t absence in our culture got somethi right, whatever one may say about th conclusions they drew from it): in mc cases, we have neither the words nc more importantly, the concepts to captu this domain of morality. It would be ha to find in any of the Indian languages word to translate 'guilt'. Of course, th absence of a word itself does not sho that the concept does not obtain, noneth less it is an important clue What we hav is a much more complex experienc which can only be described by using combination of honour, pride, shame an humiliation.[3] This is an extremely ric problematic that needs to be developed length. The point, I take it, is clear.

What we now need to do is t initiate the double-movement I mer tioned above: interrogate the weste theories of morality to construct metatheory which specifies the intellig bility conditions of the claims and prob lems of those theories This involves, bears repeating, explaining, in term intelligible to the West, how, if at all, the make sense of notions such as moral la or the concept of self prior to experience We need to construct a theory precisel because we could not make sense o their theories; because they did no capture any significant feature of ou experience. In constructing such metatheory we will bring to bear the rang of our experiences which now include not only an intuitive sense of our ow practices but also what we have learne of/from the West itself. Hence the act o this construction is at the same time reflexive grasp of our own experientia context. The theory that we construc

3 Think of the word *abhiman* in Bengali, to use local example Some of my Bengali friends woul no doubt remind me that *abhiman*, like most or a Bengali words, is untranslatable, but that is a dif ferent matter!

ıst not only be cognitively productive · us but it should at the same time say mething cognitively interesting about ɔ West too.

If all this seems a bit abstract, if not struse, consider the problem of rights: ıat makes these rights fundamental? ıe western moral and political theories / to answer by mobilizing the cluster of ıncepts we mentioned above. Since we gard the question of rights as important ır us, but cannot really make sense of the ıstification of those rights, we have no ɔtion but to undertake the project I have utlined. Perhaps the point can be made ıore persuasively if we take up an issue ıat continues to generate much passion ıd rhetoric but little clarity – the issue f secularism Addressing this issue will lso enable me to tie up the two aspects f the project I have discussed so far.

To begin, consider some of the conseuences of Balagangadhara's metatheory f Christianity. Secularization (along with roselytization) is the dynamic of reli;ion; the political doctrine of secularism nakes sense in the context of a culture that xhibits that dynamic. That Hinduism is religion was the hypothesis of western heorists who sought to explain Indian ulture. As Balagangadhara demonstrates, hat hypothesis and the theories used to ɔrove it tell us more about western culture his work also instructs the West about itself) than about Indian culture.

Western theorists fail to show hat Hinduism is an identifiable domain ndividuated by religion. It may seem as though we are now confronted with: 'what is Hinduism, if it is not a religion?' Actually, we do not need to address that question, at least not in that form, for that hypothesis makes sense only as an attempt of one culture to theorize another culture. Outside of that hypothesis and the theories generated by it, 'Hinduism' does not capture anything [4] If that is the case, what are our social scientists saying when they claim that Indian culture is insufficiently or weakly secular or that the state must be thoroughly secular?

When pressed, the social scientists come up with confused statements such as: 'Secularism is more than laws, concessions and special considerations. It is a state of mind, almost an instinctive feeling... '[5] This hardly distinguishes secularism from, say, mysticism or, indeed, from what social scientists often say about religion. The point is not the vacuousness, however well-meaning, of this particular statement; most pronouncements on secularism tend to be garbled and cliché-ridden ('essentially peace loving people who have lived in harmony and tranquillity for centuries'). It would be nothing short of a miracle if it were to turn out that this ill-defined doctrine and process were the only thing preventing our slide into 'medieval barbarism' Once we begin to free ourselves from the grip of a doctrine and its authority (Balagangadhara's attempt is a significant step in this direction), we can set about the task of re-describing the problem. For the garbled discussion on secularism is indeed an attempt to name a problem. What is the nature of this problem?

The secularists often accuse Hindu nationalists of being revivalists, indigenists, and so forth (thus the constant invocation of medieval barbarity to characterize the BJP) The idea (or perhaps the fear) is that they are anti-modern (anti-western); hence the recourse to the authority of a western doctrine (and hence also suspicion of any criticism of secularism) The secularists have got this completely wrong. The Hindu nationalists' programme attempts a tight link between territory, sovereignty and/or ethnicity. In this they are close to the West, for that indeed was/is the project of the nation-states in Europe. Will the Hindu right succeed in its attempt? I doubt it, for the simple reason that 'Hindu' does not individuate anything, which does not, of course, mean that the attempt will have no consequences.

On the other hand, the secularist narrative, which tells the story of our incomplete modernization or secularization, is also committed to the sovereignty project, except that in place of ethnicization politics they propose secularization politics. That the sovereignty project based on ethnicization is dangerous by itself does not validate the sovereignty project based on secularization. How do we then conceive of politics?

We are back to the question of valorizing the present. In the process, I hope I have persuaded you that to describe or theorize our present we have to undertake the construction of a metatheory of western theories, a description of the West, which initiates at the same time a politics of self-description, a narrative epistemology, if you like, of our experience. What I have called our apprenticeship has been an experience of detour, Political Studies initiates the project of detour or return. The narrative of that detour is at the same time a metatheory of western culture I have tried to show how such a project renders intelligible the links between abstract theoretical problems and pressing political issues. Such a project is intellectually more challenging, cognitively more productive and politically more relevant than what is currently being done in the West under the rubric of Cultural Studies [6] The project that I have outlined captures, I believe, more adequately what some of us had attempted under the rubric of Cultural Studies.

4 For a lucid and insightful discussion of these matters, see Narahari Rao, 'A Meditation on the Christian Revelations An Asian Mode of Self-Reflection', *Cultural Dynamics* 8(2), 1996

It is important to note that the claim discussed has nothing in common with the constructivism (inspired in part by Edward Said's work) that has been fashionable for some time now A quick contrast might help Western theorists have also generated descriptions of the 'caste-system' Whatever we might think of those descriptions, they are, unlike their descriptions of 'Hinduism as a religion', clearly descriptions of something Building a theory of caste is another challenge confronting Political Studies

5 S Gopal, 'Introduction', in S Gopal, et al (ed), *Anatomy of a Confrontation The Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhumi Issue*, Viking, New Delhi, 1991, p 19

6 Which should really be called resistance studies, for it studies surfing as resistance, hairstyle as resistance, watching 'Star-Trek' as resistance, rap as resistance, mimicking the white man as resistance, and other trivia There is also the variety which studies global 'flows' of culture – Madonna in Mangalore, or *Deewar* in Durban It seems to me that such studies have failed to generate any significant theoretical insights

Feminism, culture and the politics of signification

MARY E JOHN

FEMINISM in India, whether in the broader context of the women's movement, or in its relation to the production of knowledges about women, has had to deal with questions of culture for quite some time now. Gone are the days when cultural issues were either left unaddressed or broached as a kind of residue.[1] Especially since the discovery that attempts to resolve cultural conflicts in our recent history have invariably required the recasting of patriarchies – in the formation of an 'Indian' tradition, in drawing the boundaries of religion, caste and community and so on – there has been no room for the relegation of cultural matters to some subsidiary sphere. In effect, it would seem that cultural identities have been materialised through women's bodies and within their spaces.

This is also why the study of the colonial period proved to be such a crucial turning point for an Indian feminist politics, in having made concertedly visible a 'cultural nationalism wherein the underbelly of every attempt towards identity has been a redescription of women of different classes' (Sangari and Vaid, 1989:9). Since independence, critical moments in the making and remaking of the Indian nation – from the experience of partition to the contemporary debates over a uniform civil code – would further indicate that there is nothing self-evident about a feminist approach to culture and cultural politics. Indeed, the increasingly complex negotiations being staged today all in the name of women and their empowerment, require a fresh interrogation of sorts. We need to question not just the assumptions of dominant articulations of what counts as culture, such as those of a Hindutva constantly refining and updating its patriarchal schemas, but also to re-examine the presuppositions that have underwritten our feminist commitments and our understandings of the domain of the political.

It is in such a context that the field of 'cultural studies' assumes possible relevance. What part, if any, might such a field play in extending arguments about the significance of culture for contemporary feminist politics?

Let me begin what will be a somewhat rambling and disjointed discussion by turning back on the question, 'the problem' of this issue of *Seminar*. First of all I am genuinely unclear about the nature of the field that is being talked about. Even in its 'original' British version, it is evident that there is no one definitive history of, say, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham that we might turn to. At the same time – and this needs stressing – the kind of overeasy descriptions of cultural studies' 'interdisciplinary' if not 'anti-disciplinary' status, its method of 'bricolage', its 'diverse' and 'multiple' locations, and so on, which are being made by those actively promoting its institutionalisation in the U S (Grossberg et al, 1992:1-16) are disin-

[1] For instance, in some early studies on women and the household, practices such as purdah or the realm of religion were only fleetingly brought in after economic explanations for women's variable activities outside the home had been exhausted

nuous and problematic. One hears too tle about the *exclusions* that inevitably ark the making of any field.

n a recent account of the theoretical gacies of cultural studies, Stuart Hall peatedly returns to the 'great deal of ad feeling, argument, unstable anxieties nd angry silences' that accompanied eoretical work at Birmingham. But ven in the hands of so sensitive and elf-reflexive a practitioner, who openly cknowledges how feminism in the '70s ad to 'break' into cultural studies in an nseemly fashion, by rejecting the patrirchal door that had been offered (Hall, 992: 277-294), the realisation of exclusions such as these remain elusive in his wn work A new generation of feminist scholars working in Birmingham in the 90s do not appear to have found the relation between cultural studies and feminism any easier than their predecessors; feminism, in other words, has not graduated into becoming one position amongst others in an egalitarian array.[2]

Clearly, therefore, any version of cultural studies would at best be a partial one, that is, biased and incomplete. But biased or not, I am basically not convinced that we need to trace the genealogy of cultural studies in the West in the first place, in order then to come to a decision about its relevance for us in India I would even say that there is something misconceived about this way of stating 'the problem'.

If pressed to say more about cultural studies from my limited perspective, I would tend to play down unreliable and imprecise claims about its pluralism. While it has undoubtedly been formed by a broad set of contested disciplines, methodologies, fields of inquiry and left-wing political affiliations, some objects and methods do appear to be more privileged than others. Thus, I see no problem in acknowledging that the various tendencies falling within the ambit of post-structuralism or 'theory' have been a particularly significant theoretical resource; or to put this the other way around, in the U.S. at least, cultural studies seems to have become the political and intellectual successor of the politically more slippery institution of 'theory'. To take a different example, of all the domains to have been reconstituted by cultural studies, the media has surely been the most visible.

But there is another doubt that also needs to be addressed in our context. Given the pivotal place that (middle class, upper caste) women occupied in the constitution of an 'Indian culture' over against the 'West', feminists questioning the inequalities of gender have been particularly and persistently hampered by accusations of their western-ness and consequent inauthenticity. Wouldn't 'cultural studies', then, become a new western burden, baggage we could do without? Let me begin a response in typical cultural studies style by commenting on a recent film.

Originally produced in Tamil, *Kaadàlan* (Lover) has been an equal success in Telugu (*Premikudu*) and Hindi (*Hum Se Hai Muqabla*); it has ensured the fame of Prabhudeva, who plays the hero, as India's most dazzling dancing sensation. As someone who is no cinema buff, and who is invariably upset by the routine legitimation of sexual harassment in the courting or song and dance sequences of most films, I was quite differently affected by one of Kaadalan's later scenes: After having been captured by the heroine's father, the state Governor and (as only the audience yet knows) master saboteur, the hero Prabhu is being tortured by a police officer for his alleged terrorist activities. It takes a moment or two to realise that the officer is a woman. But this unexpected fact has, I think, more to it. The short hair, male attire, professionalism, and confident power, combine with other images familiar to viewers, such as Kiran Bedi, or the demand for women-only police stations, to produce a composite and contradictory figure, a popular media construction and caricature of Indian feminism. The torture scene is shot in the mode of high realism, in stark contrast to the rest of the film, especially the subsequent highly acclaimed 'Muqabla' song/dance, which is explicitly and utterly artefactual (from the 'Colorado' Wild West sets and the hero's dyed blond hair, to the computer engineered dancing clothes). Such realism, replete with sombre tones and sounds of torture, also ensures our dis-identification from the brilliantly enacted policewoman who neither hesitates to force rice with cockroaches down the hero's throat, nor to straddle him while ordering the hero's father (a constable) to beat him into owning up to his terrorist and Dalit identity.[3] Though her presence does not last for more than a few minutes, she is not easily forgotten.

This figure, in all its dystopic male-bashing, is significant because of the decisive way it deflects and reshapes the media image of feminism that is otherwise so common – the sexually aggressive, bra-burning, nude marcher from the West. The point is not so much that such media creations are falsifications. Especially where feminism is concerned, the absence of public figures or a political party contributes to its fuzziness outside select circles. Above all, of course, the power of media constructions are precisely in their reality-effects, never in their truthfulness. So it is not that this figure is any truer than some other western one, but that she is produced out of a thoroughly homegrown Indian modernity, neither traditional nor foreign. According to my overreading, therefore, she signals the arrival of *Indian* feminism in public culture. Doubts about our westernisation need not, therefore, beset us as much as they seem to do.

2 Some of these feminists have underscored the uneven overlap between feminism and cultural studies, and are contending with the lack of a gendered dimension in key studies, such as the one on 'Thatcherism' in Britain (Franklin et al, 1991, especially pp 1-46)

3 In her interrogation, the police officer demands to know who the hero is 'Prabhu? Is that all? Nothing more? .Khalistani, Kashmiri, Palestinian .. ?' In a context where middle and upper castes use their last names to emphasize their caste status, the needling of the officer over his single name exposes the hero as Dalit The overall caste politics of the film are complex and ambiguous (For a provocative analysis of this film, see Dhareshwar and Niranjana, 1996)

In her account of becoming a feminist, Neera Desai recalls the distinct 'allergy' that attached to the term feminism in the '70s (Desai, 1995: 250). Flavia Agnes has also remarked on how feminists, in an effort to counter accusations of being western, relied on 'Hindu iconography and Sanskrit idioms denoting womanpower, thus inadvertently strengthening the communal ideology that Indian, Hindu and Sanskrit are synonymous' (Flavia, 1994: 1124) This allergy has been discernible in attempts to shun an imputed western-ness, visible also in women's studies accounts of the irrelevance of the western legacy of 'liberal, radical and socialist feminism', and, more recently, in disparaging references to 'deconstruction' or 'postmodernism'. I would rather suggest the possibility, today, of a looser, more open-ended, if always critical relationship to outside influences. Our authenticity should no longer be on the line. In the face of the kind of onslaught globalisation represents, involving the precipitate inflow of commodities (including academic ones) which are not under our control, a cautionary counter-internationalism may be our best strategy.

The danger of cultural studies – as with any intellectual field coming from the West into the third world – lies in its normative power, which includes the ability to set research agendas and standards of theory Therefore, in order to be effective at all, the stance I am advocating would have to be substantially grounded within and shaped by the explicit effort of looking back to the last twenty years of feminist theorizing in India. We have barely begun such a task. A vast body of work, produced in different parts of the country, under heterogeneous conditions and in different languages, has yet to be understood as 'theory'; since we may not have adequately thought through what counts as theory for our purposes. Secondly, a number of issues have yet to be theorised, because they have either been marginalised or are only just emerging

Such an effort seems especially crucial in the present context. A new generation of women, who are in the process of becoming feminist in a world decisively different from the frameworks of the '70s, which had made post-independence feminism possible, may otherwise continue to assume that feminist theory, including the study of culture, only comes from elsewhere. I have no doubt that some of feminism's entanglements with cultural studies are important and useful resources, and should be engaged with In suggesting a less rigid attitude – neither allergic nor celebratory – to new intellectual currents, I am also trying to shift attention away from our relation with the West, to what might be a more productive frame – namely, the relation between culture and politics

A major difficulty accompanying the use of the term 'culture' in the contemporary context, comes from its proliferation. I have already drawn attention to its 'special' relation to women. Whereas the '70s gave the women's movement its first initiatives in the area of economic development, culminating in distinct 'autonomous' analyses of patriarchy, the '80s witnessed an onrush of cultural problems none were prepared for – the anti-Sikh riots, the Shah Bano controversy and Roop Kanwar's sati, continuing into the '90s with Mandal and Ayodhya.

In spite of all its complexity if not incoherence, cultural theorists have discouraged us from 'abandon(ing) "culture" on the grounds that it is too messy, precisely because we should be able to account for this messiness at some level' (Niranjana et al, 1993·7) The inescapability of culture has also been emphasized by pointing out that 'while the nation is undoubtedly the most important political unit in the world today. . the "rationality" of the nation is not theoretical in the conventional sense of the word, but akin to the rationality of art' (Tharu and Lalita, 1993: 50,51). The term 'culture' has often been defined in contrast to something else – as the realm of distinction within the more everyday workings of 'society', as the entirety of human activity and creation opposed to an inert, pre-given 'nature', or again, a the world of the imagination in contrast to the materiality of the 'economy'.

Such attempts to pin down the meanings of culture are clearly more problematic than helpful. The counter-suggestion emanating from the kind of work I have just cited (and consonant with the thrust of cultural studies), is to look at the field of culture in political terms, to weave back and forth between the cultural and the political Attention therefore shifts to questions of power, the effects of domination, and the possibilities of destabilisation.

However, the question of a cultural *politics* still needs to be thematized and clarified In the ongoing debate over the uniform civil code, for instance, it would be worth trying to map the assumptions about culture that underwrite some of the stances adopted, in order to see where they connect with the political positions being taken. Such a task is obviously well beyond the confines of this paper I could, no doubt, point out how for Madhu Kishwar the key strength of Hindu culture, namely its diversity, was 'road rollered' out of existence after independence by an alien, hybrid, conservative and state-imposed Hindu Code Bill (Kishwar 1994); that Kumkum Sangari questions the current inflation, as she sees it, of religious community as the 'primordial' marker of identity, which should rather be 'downplayed' in favour of the jurisdiction of the state (Sangari 1995); or that Flavia Agnes perceives the deliberate expansion of the term 'Hindu' from the confines of religion to a composite, all-encompassing notion of culture, (during the drafting of the Hindu Code Bill) to have had grave political implications for the present (Flavia 1996). But I think this leaves 'culture' still too vague, too gross and unwieldy

Therefore, I would propose breaking down cultural politics into smaller coin. One way of accomplishing this would be to attend to the very divergent careers of some of the major political

categories – of gender, class, community and so on – which are commonly invoked as giving a direction to our efforts What is it about gender today that makes it so flexible and popular, so open to annexation, when compared with other concepts such as class or caste? The analysis of class, for instance, which functioned as such a strong, if not dominant oppositional force in our context, seems to have been adversely affected by the loss of economic nationalism, a development that is in some danger of going unremarked. The category of religion appears strangely contradictory – celebrated in all its syncretism and diversity, but opposed as a political force. In spite of the renewal of Dalit politics, caste, in turn, suffers from a special negativity, a reluctance to give it any positive political, signifying space. (Consider the ease with which 'casteism' is used against lower castes, or the distinctly unequal importance accorded to brahminism and communalism in contemporary analyses.)

Discussing political categories in this way is meant to make apparent the insufficiency of a feminist politics that relies only on itself and its past history – like a talisman For such a feminism to move ahead and take on the challenges of the present, it must re-evaluate, that is to say, *signify anew* the politics of class, caste and religion. Political demands, such as the contemporary call for legal gender justice, cannot be evaluated in the abstract, but take on significance within multiple domains of intervention.

Precisely because Dalit and Muslim women suffer from the annihilating effects of too much identity, it is crucial to support processes that expand their everyday spaces into spaces of signification. Questioning the hold of dominant forces of caste and communalism by disidentifying from their agendas might strengthen the struggles of Muslims and Dalits against an environment whose logic so far has been one of exclusion or containment. In order to be effective, a cultural politics would have to become a politics of signification, always alert to the logics and frameworks governing claims of empowerment, since it is these frameworks which would distinguish between advances or retreats. Resignifying the categories of caste and community affiliation by making them more amenable to contestation is also necessary in order that the patriarchies of dominated groups – that is, dominated, fractured patriarchies – can be challenged.

Whether the institution of cultural studies elsewhere will be relevant in such a context depends less on its somewhat helpless proclamations regarding the need to 'integrate gender with race, class and sexuality'. It would hinge rather, on its ability to demonstrate in concrete historical instances how gender relations cannot be questioned except through a simultaneous destabilisation of those other coordinates of power as well.

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Information inequality

DIPANKAR SINHA

WHAT is life without information? If this statement seems too dramatic we had better remember that human civilization on the threshold of the 21st century has reached a point where information[1] is the key to economic, political and cultural supremacy. In the contemporary period, widely known as the Information Age, information has firmly established itself as the gateway to knowledge and thus to power and wealth. The emergence of an information society and economy has made information the controlling resource of social transformation and the most decisive factor of production. It is no exaggeration to say that information in the present day world 'has become a talisman, a symbol of political potency and economic prosperity.'[2]

Positioned at the core of production, processing and dissemination of knowledge, information creates a vast network on a global basis with support from various state-of-the-art technologies and becomes a symbol of cultural assertion This network visualises a global neighbourhood with a view to creating a greater degree of *cultural affinity* among its inhabitants. The vision of a global neighbourhood is no longer an impossible utopia The unifying and integrating power of information technologies, by telescoping space and time, has made the world suitably 'small' and interdependent for it to become a reality However, the question is. whose vision of global neighbourhood is it?

With this question in focus the discussion goes on to argue that the information-induced vision of global neighbourhood is culturally so structured, and its function so patterned, that it will provide India, despite its impressive information base, merely the status of a subservient 'neighbour'. In other words, the main plank of the argument is that inherent in the vision and existence of a global neighbourhood is an inequitable information order that is culturally constructed to ensure that India does not possess enough control over information resources to be a 'neighbour' with a sovereign and equal status.

It should be clarified that the purpose of the present discussion is to make a preliminary attempt to develop an Indian context within a global perspective. This is not only because *local* India is a part of the global scenario but also because any attempt to develop an Indian context must take into account both the process of globalisation, and the information inequality that creates a severe imbalance in power and status between the developed and the developing states

Information has an infinite variety of forms It can just be raw data, or by processing it can take the form of fact.

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[1] The author wishes to thank Anjan Ghosh for preliminary discussions on which the article is based and Professor Sourin Bhattacharya for his suggestions The usual disclaimers apply

1 Information in its elemental form means content(s) of message(s) But in the discussion it also refers to raw and processed data, facts, opinions, ideas, knowledge and even images For a discussion on the primacy of information in the contemporary age, see Anthony E Smith, 'The Information Revolution of the 1990s', *Political Quarterly*(54), 1983, 187-91

2 William J Martin, *The Information Society* Adlib London, p 1

opinion or knowledge Its nature can be economic, commercial, political or cultural. The information explosion that acts as the precursor to the Information Age ensures that information has an unparalleled global reach. The importance of information technology is as evident in accurate forecasts of the weather or share price as in remote-control warfare or Virtual Reality [3] In the ultimate analysis, power over information means power over destiny. Information increases strength because it enhances awareness of both opportunities and risks. More information means less uncertainty.

The way an individual's power over decision-making is aided by (accurate) information, the state's control over production, processing and dissemination of information enhances its power and status by having greater control over events of various kinds, both within and beyond its borders. It is not a coincidence that the economically advanced countries of North America, western Europe, and a few Asian countries like Japan, have superseded their industrial society/economy to have a firmly established information society/economy In these countries with a highly developed service sector, goods and services which have the task of conveying information or which are directly used in information production, processing and distribution, have increasing control over the economy.

Let us refer to the U S..economy with special emphasis on the service sector Available data[4] show that the share of jobs in services in the U.S. rose steadily from 62% to 72% of all non-agricultural employment between 1960-80. Over the same period, some 86% of all new jobs were in the service economy. U S. service exports rose from U S $132 billion in 1983 to $142 billion in 1984. By January 1986, the U S. service sector accounted for more than 22 million jobs

3 Virtual Reality (VR) refers to computer-generated simulated worlds with which, with the help of technologies, one can interact directly by means of the senses

4 'America's Service Economy', *Editorial Research Reports*, 27 June 1986, Washington, pp 476-77

Information has not suddenly become a force to reckon with in the West. The 'battle' for control over the *information market* among the western developed states was evident as far back as in the mid-'40s Hedebro mentions[5] how with the termination of the 'policy of isolation', the U.S , during the period, focused its attention on the global information order.[6] The U.S Government's successful 'offensive' at that time was two-pronged: it was not only against Britain and France, the two western powers dominating the global commerce, but also against their news agencies[7] which were controlling global dissemination of information. While a U S. endorsement of the doctrine of free trade was destined to take over the commercial interests of the European competitors, that of the free flow doctrine was designed to wrest control over the global flow of information. It can be added here that the information society emerged in the U.S. in the mid-1950s, that is, within a span of 10 years from the period just mentioned.

Today, information flow is not confined to the three Ts – telegraph, telephone and telex. The impact of informatics is evident in the growing dependence on e-mail, e-fax, cellular mobile phones, pagers, teletext, and computer data banks/ data bases It is also evident in technological marvels like microchip, satellite, microwave, robotics, to name a few. However, technology can never be value-neutral. The 'splendid' progress made possible by information technologies and the consequent process of *informatisation*, simultaneously construct a global information order that is culture specific

5 Goran Hedebro, *Communication as Social Change in Developing Nations A Critical View*, Iowa State University Press Ames, 1982, pp 55-6

6 The Order, also known as the World Information and Communication Order and the International Information Order, is both the cause and consequence of the information flows at global level

7 Reuters of Britain and Havas of France were particularly targeted The domination of these two agencies in the pre-Second World War era are beyond any doubt The U S news agencies trying to wrest control were Associated Press (AP) and the United Press International (UPI)

in the sense of being inherently and totally Westcentric. Herein lies the relevance of exploration into the global neighbourhood

In terms of cultural assertion, the global neighbourhood is an advanced form of the McLuhanite concept of the global village.[8] In McLuhan's global village, the global penetration of information and knowledge, made possible by progress in electronic technology, would have made it possible for us to come in close contact with various cultures without losing our own cultural identity..The concept of a global neighbourhood is aggressive in the sense that, by its very metaphor, it stresses a greater proximity than was required in the global village. In the global neighbourhood certain *collaborative ethos* are promoted as neighbourhood norms, with a view to transform the world into a *monocultural* entity. The changing mode and the multiplying frequency of information flow, supported by advanced technologies, unleash a process of *cultural synchronisation* (discussed subsequently) in the global neighbourhood.

In recent times some events of great importance provide an indication that in the global neighbourhood the *modus operandi* of information would come in the way of ideal neighbourhood values like equality and justice. The Gulf War (1991) remains a grand example of how information can be 'manufactured', perverted and selectively disseminated to enforce, on a global scale, favourable public opinion During the war, manipulation of information by the U S. and its allies, aided by trans-border satellite transmission, showed how control over information facilitates production of certain cognitive stances to serve the political interests of the powerful states [9]

On a different front, but in an identical mode, the information game was played in the case of the Uruguay Round

8 In this context see Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenburg Galaxy The Making of Typographic Man* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1962

9 The point is discussed in Dipankar Sinha 'Information Game Lesson from Gulf War', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 4 May 1991 pp 1147-49

of the GATT. The Dunkel Treaty can be interpreted as the outcome of a systematic effort by the developed western states, despite some internal differences among them, to exert greater control over information and knowledge. The zeal with which the states pursued the issue of Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) – of which the patent issue is a major part – proves the vital importance of information as a 'weapon' of trade war. For the purpose of this discussion it is important that in both cases the developed western states acted unilaterally, ruling out the possibility of any dialogue with their weaker counterparts. In both instances, though by different manifestations, information and knowledge remained the 'personal property' of certain neighbours with little scope for access by others.[10] In the global neighbourhood information becomes a commodity, the possession of which generates neighbours' envy, owners' pride.

In his study[11] on cultural synchronisation, Cees Hamelink provides some interesting clues. Starting with the observation that it can take place even without imperialistic relations, Hamelink describes the process of cultural synchronisation as a particular type of cultural development in the metropolitan country that is persuasively *communicated* to the receiving countries. Cultural synchronisation, to elaborate, implies a one-way traffic of cultural products with a *synchronic mode*. It also implies that decisions regarding the cultural development in a given country are made in accordance with the interests and needs of powerful nations(s) and imposed with subtle but devastating effectiveness without regard for the adaptive necessities of the dependent nations. Hamelink's observations are useful in analysing India's role and status in the global neighbourhood.

Because in the global neighbourhood the road to domination lies through information control, *ideally* the most effective way to gain equal status in it, and to resist the process of cultural synchronisation for third world countries like India, is to establish an information society/economy which would not be 'remote controlled' from the West. But the solution is not so simple. With the developed states, mostly those of the West with the U.S. at the forefront, in firm control of the global information order and third world states suffering from *information famine*, the possibility of establishing third world-oriented information society/economy is a remote possibility today Even if, hypothetically speaking, the developed states allow their third world counterparts to establish one, it will be in strict conformity to the conditionalities of the existing global information order. The net result will be that the process of cultural synchronisation will continue unabated, and the inequality in the status of 'neighbours' in the global neighbourhood will remain undisturbed. Let us illustrate the point with India in mind.

True, India has a developed information base unlike most third world countries. But the question is: is it developed enough to resist the process of cultural synchronisation?

With its vast pool of scientific and technological manpower, India enjoys a natural competitive edge in its effort to establish an information society/economy. The country has more than three million scientists and engineers, and 750,000 engineering students [12] In India, 10% of the workforce is engaged in information work as teachers, scientists, journalists, secretaries, computer programmers, managers/consultants – earning 42% of the GNP.[13] The Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), situated in Pune, plays a leading role in India's efforts to develop an indigenous fifth generation computer. Home computers, only 35,000 in 1988,[14] have multiplied in the '90s, with accessories like floppy discs and software programmes being manufactured indigenously. India's computer software exports have increased manifold – from a mere US $3 million in 1980 to $700 million in 1996.[15]

India is also adopting technology-friendly governmental policies with special emphasis on application of micro-electronics innovations in computer and telecommunications. It has been able to establish high-tech research organisations and engineering institutes. Satellites, including the high-profile INSAT 1A and INSAT 1B, have been utilised to play a constructive role in the country in many areas – from making possible long distance telephone calls to spreading education and entertainment in the remotest parts

India has also made great strides in (computer) networking which assures instant flow of information both within and beyond its borders. The Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL), a wholly owned public sector enterprise established for providing international telecom services, plays a key role here. The VSNL has exclusive rights over subscription to Internet, one of the most powerful networks 'wiring' the world. Since May 1996, All India Radio (AIR) began subscribing to Internet The National Informatics Centre (NIC) has undertaken, through Nicnet, the task of providing governmental networking facilities in the domestic sphere, encompassing territories down to the village level.

The Department of Telecommunications (DOT) along with its Centre of Development of Telecommunications (C-DOT), and Telecommunications Consultants Limited (TCIL) are providing the lead in research, development and consultancy in telecommunications The Department of Electronics (DOE) is doing the same in the field of electronics

10 Obviously part of it is due to the fact that western countries had a much longer time at their disposal for preparing themselves for the information society/economy For corroboration of this point in the American context, James R Beniger, *The Control Revolution* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass , 1986

11. Cees J. Hamelink, *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications Planning for National Information Policy* Longman, New York, 1983, pp 5-6, 22

12 Arvind Singhal and Everett M Rogers, *India's Information Revolution* Sage, New Delhi, 1989, p. 221

13 Ibid , p. 197.

14. Ibid , p 202

15 'Funds for Software Exports Urged', *The Statesman* (Calcutta), 21 May 1996, p 16

Indian has about 1,52,786 post offices.[16] The AIR performs the incredible task of broadcasting 288 news bulletins daily with a total of 38 hours and 51 minutes [17] Doordarshan claims a primary viewership to the extent of 250 million.[18] The country has 3,700 daily newspapers in English and regional languages.[19]

In 1991, in an effort[20] to measure the size of India's information sector, it was estimated that the total value of output of information goods and services in the year 1986-87 came to Rs. 3,15,290 million (with 1 US$= 21.07 Indian rupees) or 10.81% of the GNP at 'current market prices'. The estimate, however, excludes the banking sector which is widely considered a part of the information sector. Still, it includes a variety of informational *items* like postal services, telecommunications, information and broadcasting, research and training (related to space, agriculture, atomic energy, oceanography, cancer, family welfare, and environment, to mention some), R&D (related to army, ecology, forests and wildlife, sports, industry, labour, tourism, women's education and culture, to include some), computer software, printing and publishing of newspapers, books, journals and periodicals, output of business services like auditing, accounting, data processing and advertising, and capital formation in the manufacture of radio and television sets, computers, medical and scientific equipment. The *items* not only illustrate the role, size and scope of India's information sector; they also give an idea of the widening web of information channels in our life both in the Indian and the general context.

This discussion might make one optimistic enough to conclude that by unplugging such a vast information base India will be able to establish an information society/economy *par excellence*. However, such a conclusion would be both hasty and simplistic. India faces a number of hurdles which are sure to 'neutralise' its progress. The *administrative* hurdles include an excessively centralised decision-making process, inadequate infrastructural facilities; failure to check the brain-drain syndrome; ambivalent policies towards multinational corporations and foreign investment; an inability to sustain expensive, high-tech research programmes; lack of coordination between government, research institutes, academic institutions and industry; lack of collaboration and private funding in R&D; and bureaucratic red-tapism. As a passing reference it can be noted that despite having 1,300 R&D institutes, the number of scientific and technological patents registered by India is only 1000 per annum [21] The fact that India spends only 1 5% of its GNP for R&D[22] indicates that the government's efforts too leave much to be desired.

Keeping in mind our basic contention, it can be reiterated that even if the administrative hurdles could be removed, overcoming the cultural impediment will prove to be extremely difficult, if not impossible. India has its own *cultural identity* and it does not share much similarity with that of the West. India is a country of more than 900 million[23] people with two major 'classes' – the rich and the poor. If India is one of the ten leading industrial powers in the world, it also has an agrarian economy – a fact which cannot be ignored. If the country boasts of a large number of scientific and technical personnel, it should be noted that this constitutes only 0.3% per 1000 people.[24] India at the same time faces great difficulty in making available elementary education to its citizens. Rural India lacks adequate drinking water, health care and medical facilities; income-generative employment, rural Indians suffer from 'chronic' poverty. Thus there are grave doubts about the *development reach* of India's apparently burgeoning information sector.

To an average Indian it makes little sense that Doordarshan has a 'tie-up' with CNN for providing high-quality television software; nor does the fact of cyber-cafes becoming popular in metropolitan India have any relevance for him. India cannot disown this cultural identity when it seeks to use information for future prosperity in the global neighbourhood

In one of his speeches,[25] the former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, emphasised the need for India's self-reliance in information technologies to lessen dependence on the West. While this shows that top policy-makers are aware of the need to stand on our own in matters of information, such awareness is yet to be reflected in practice. It does not need much elaboration that the establishment of a relatively self-reliant information society/economy is ultimately an issue which concerns people. Evolution and reinforcement of information channels must play a role in human resource development by helping people to acquire and develop *capabilities* – the power to make use of available resources – in values, attitudes, skills and knowledge.

But, as the following statistics show, India has not made much progress in this regard Data supplied by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) shows[26] that India has 5.77 lakh 'super rich households' with each having an income over Rs. 1 million per annum, and 74,000 households surpass the 'super rich' category with each having an income of over Rs. 5 million

16 *India 1995 A Reference Annual*, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1996, p 629

17 Ibid , p 256

18 Ibid , p 274

19 Ibid., p 275

20 Vijay L Kelkar, Devendra N Chaturvedi and Madhav K Dar, 'India's Information Economy', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 14 September 1991, pp 2153-66, especially, pp 2158-59

21 *India's Information Revolution*, p 223

22 Ibid , p 222

23 India's population stood at 898 2 million in mid-1993 Source *World Development Report 1995*, World Bank-Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, p 62.

24 *Human Development Report 1995* UNDP-Oxford University Press, New York, p 175

25 'P M Unveils India's Latest Computer Systems', *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 24 April 1995, p 5

26 'Study on Affluence', National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi Reported in *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), 12 October 1995, p 19

per annum. At the other extreme, statistics conjure up the picture of the 'other India' with data revealing that the percentage of population below the poverty line increasing from 39 3 in 1987 to 40 69 in 1992.[27] Statistics also reveal that of an estimated 200 million Indians in the 6-14 age group, half are outside the social system, either as non-enrolled or drop-outs [28] The fact that in 1991 as many as 255,608 bonded labour were identified and freed[29] speaks volumes of the 'other India'. The magnitude of the problem can be better understood by the fact that unofficial estimates of child labour in India at present range from 44 to 100 million.[30]

The Human Development Report 1995 puts India at 134th position[31] in its Human Development Index. Interestingly, the position of Sri Lanka in the same index is 97th.[32] The Report which now enjoys credibility the world over, also mentions that while the adult literacy rate in India is just 49.9%,[33] in Sri Lanka it is 89.3% It also estimates[34] that from the late '80s to the early '90s, 185.7 million Indians were without access to safe drinking water, 132 7 million without access to health services, and 645 6 million without sanitation. To add, the total external debt in India, according to the Report, stood at US$77 billion in 1992[35] while the *World Development Report 1995* mentions the figure as US$83.254 million in 1993.[36]

Thus, notwithstanding Narasimha Rao's assertion of self-reliance, India's unimpressive performance in developing *enabling* capacities for a greater number of its people would compel it to remain a passive recipient of the Westcentric process of cultural synchronisation. It is only natural then that we are being constantly informed of the magical properties of the market and the 'inherent deficiencies' of the state concerning improvement in quality of life It is for the same reason that consumerist values, idioms and images are being *communicated* to us unceasingly.

In the same vein, a barrage of data induce us to develop a political culture of passivity – a culture of looking up to the West for everything we do So *their* images become *our* images, and *their* values *ours*. Contemporary India has proved to be a 'good neighbour' in the sense that it has put up little resistance to the 'collaborative ethos' of the global neighbourhood and to the process of cultural synchronisation

In perfect harmony with the dominant ethics of the neighbourhood it has 'liberalised' itself In perfect harmony with the dominant ethics of the neighbourhood it has weakened its state considerably by unbridled privatisation, opened its market to the Western multinational corporations, reduced state subsidy, and devalued its currency.

In *Information Inequality*[37] Herbert Schiller, a well-known researcher in communication studies, elaborates how every facet of our living is being, or has been, transformed into a 'separate, paid-for transaction' with corporatisation of information. While an analysis of the point raised by Schiller is beyond the purview of this article, the cognitive dimension that such a message underlines should not be missed

There is every possibility of missing the wood for the trees if we view the *information problematic* just in terms of our strength and deficiency in technology Technological determinism is a stumbling block to developing a comprehensive perspective on the problematic Back in the '70s Jurgen Habermas warned[38] us about the threat of technocratic reason. Habermas explained that its threat to human freedom emerges from the fact that *technocratic reason*, by systematically reducing political debate to a purely technical level, keeps the question of real distribution of power and control in a society outside popular scrutiny.

What we see in the global neighbourhood is a very subtle and apparently invisible promotion of technocratic reason. Such activity is being carried on with 'bombardment' of information, unleashing a steady assault on our senses and values The mode and frequency of the West-centric information flows creates a specific cultural medium that leaves little *space*, for the states which are at its receiving end, for construction of a *world-view* of their own. The process in its effort to enframe the world structures our vision in such a way that we gradually lose control over our *thinking self*, and begin to enjoy the status of passive recipients

The discussion in this paper is to be regarded as a 'prologue' to an Indian perspective on the information and the global neighbourhood This is because a *full-fledged* perspective can emerge when India policy-makers take a definite stand on the issue If the government has a national information policy it could raise many issues mentioned in the discussion, by bringing the general question of India's political, economic and cultural autonomy and the related question of India's technological self-reliance to the fore.

In other words, having a national information policy could have led to a search for India's *own conscious choice* in building a *national information infrastructure* (NII).[39] While it is absurd to think that India can survive today without being a part of the global neighbourhood, it must also be seen that this does not lead to submission to *external* forces which seek to determine our objectives and priorities and define our way of life.

27 *The State of India's Economy 1994-95*, Public Interest Research Group, New Delhi, 1995, p 64

28 Ibid , p 83

29 Ibid , p 16

30 Ibid

31 *Human Development Report 1995*, p 157

32 Ibid , p 156

33 Ibid , p 157

34 Ibid , p 161

35 Ibid , p 181

36 *World Development Report 1995*, p 200

37 Herbert I Schiller, *Information Inequality* Routledge and Kegan Paul, New York 1995

38 Jurgen Habermas, *Towards the Rational Society* Heinemann, London, 1971

39 I thank Kishore N Bagchi for drawing my attention to the term

The travesties of our modern art institutions

TAPATI GUHA-THAKURTA

IN JANUARY 1996 Calcutta was witness to a major national art event Alongside the city's usual round of annual all-India art exhibitions – at the Academy of Fine Arts and at the Birla Academy of Art and Culture, the annual display of the Government College of Art and the solo shows at her newest state-of-the-art gallery, Centre for International Modern Art (CIMA) – Calcutta was the venue for the first time of a 'Rashtriya Kala Mela' organised by New Delhi's Lalit Kala Akademi. More than all the other exhibitions, the Kala Mela became a kind of singular occasion

Arguably, it was for all the wrong reasons From beginning to end, the event was mired in allegations of mismanagement, nepotism and stupendous waste of funds The expenditure (upwards of Rs. 1.5 million), it seems, found its match only in artistic mediocrity and organisational ineptitude. Controversy and criticism surrounded almost every stage of the Mela. It began with the choice of the Victoria Memorial grounds as a venue. The appropriateness of such an imperial edifice as a setting for an event that was 'national' and 'modern' was debated as much as the squandering of one of the city's rare protected public spaces. And what this inevitably tied up with was a broader concern about the collapse of the Victoria Memorial as a museum, the politics of its internal administration and the commercial sale of its grounds.

Bit by bit, other aspects of the fair came under fire: favouritism in the allocation of stalls, the promotion of groups, regardless of merit, over individual artists; the conspicuous absence of the 'artistic community' from the inaugural programme and from most of the organisational set-up; the low-key publicity, leading partly to the low attendance and sales at the fair, the overload of kitsch, copies and second-rate student art on display, often at preposterous prices The

indignation of the bulk of the 'artistic community' (the term, presumably, implying the names that matter) staged itself through absence, giving the grounds over almost entirely to small-timers. And even the closing ceremony on 20 January of felicitating some of Calcutta's senior artists had its share of bungles and boycott by those earmarked for awards. At the end of the day, the verdict seemed clear: it was a poor show in the name of a grand extravaganza.[1]

The point of this essay, however, is not to replay the many voices of discontent that orchestrated around the Kala Mela in Calcutta, or to defend the occasion and the productions it harboured. It is to use the instance of this Kala Mela to reflect on the nature of our national art institutions and the art events they sponsor. It would be instructive, in this context, to scrutinize some of the main strands of the reactions that spun off the event: for it would lead us to dissect many of the fundamental categories that prevail as our given criteria of evaluation. It would mean taking a closer look at the particular expectations and markers of the 'modern', the existing canons of 'high/good' art, or the definitions of the 'public' and the 'popular', through which this specific event was judged.

For many of us stepping in and out of the fair grounds in Calcutta, the Mela appeared a travesty of what such a modern art occasion should have been If so, what was it we perceived as being travestied or betrayed in the handling of such an event? What were the actual or imagined models from which this art fair seemed to have so pointedly digressed? And what were the very different scenarios that registered their presence, filling up the large space of our everyday current art practices?

This invokes, in turn, the other widespread reaction the Mela provoked – a sense of the mediocrity of the art that was on offer. Here, too, this notion of mediocrity requires to be pinned down, located within a history, set off against the implied enclaves of excellence in the past and in the present. As a travesty of the 'modern', as a symptom of the crisis of our national institutions, or as a mirror of the mediocrity of our public culture, the Kala Mela opened out other histories that have to be confronted.

Perhaps, this is where the project of cultural studies in India can enter the grounds opened out by such an event Admittedly, it comes in through a circuitous route. Yet, it is precisely in the digressions away from the immediate and established territory of cultural productions that this new entity of 'cultural studies' has tried to mark out a place for itself. If it has any definition at all, cultural studies would claim the label of a critical method rather than of any formed or operative discipline Its identity lies, in fact, in its position outside disciplines, in the interstices of various set units of study that have been laid out in the normative realms of our culture Such a position on the outside becomes central to the range and flexibility of its analysis, to its ability to seek out new sites and vantage points at the cross-currents of different academic and cultural streams.

Resisting disciplinary boundaries, it necessarily questions the way territories are demarcated and approaches and authorities consecrated around particular cultural genres. In our case, it would place under scrutiny the very field of modern Indian art. A melange of multiple styles, schools and centres, modern Indian art, nonetheless, stands as a distinctly defined domain, commanding a certain historical lineage, aesthetic credentials and institutional locations.

In many ways, an occurrence like the Kala Mela (despite its apparent shortcomings) disturbed the sanctity of this domain In making sense of it, we may have to come out of the well-marked niches of art history or art criticism into the more tenuous terrain of cultural studies. For only then could we supplant the vocabulary of quality and creativity (the ultimate choice of 'good' and 'bad' art) with the language of institutions and public spheres, pedagogies and practices to address the same subject.

Let us return to the occasion with which we had begun. Let us, for instance take apart each of the constituent elements that made for the 'Rashtriya Kala Mela' What provides the definition of *rashtriya* (national)? What stands for *kala* (art) in such a public institutional site? And what goes into the notion of a modern art *mela*' The national and institutional tag, I would argue, becomes inseparable from the texture of the art and the event that it adheres to. The 'national' component of the event derived primarily from its organisational body: the state institution of the Lalit Kala Akademi.

The term *rashtriya* can have different nuances depending on one's location In Bengali, it refers more specifically to matters of state, in distinction from the term *jatiya*, which more broadly connotes the nation Interestingly, in our official language, such distinctions have been effaced to make the state synonymous with the nation in the common term *rashtriya*. In keeping with the Hindi and national usage of the term, ideas of state and nation closely overlapped in an affair where state sponsorship was as important as the mobilising of nation-wide participation. Much of the tension emerges from the state's enactment of national role and from the ways in which this national/state institution both stands in for, and stands outside, the circuit of modern Indian art. The Lalit Kala Akademi, and this Kala Mela in particular, become grounds where the notion of what qualifies as national and modern in art are invariably open to contest.

Lalit Kala Akademi at a Glance (the title of its new information booklet gives the picture of a body with wide and entrenched locations in the field of art Its definition of Indian art tries to cover the whole spectrum from the ancient and medieval schools to handicrafts and folk art; yet its primary identification lies with the nation's modern art history and contemporary art practices. As an autonomous body, financed by the Government

1 I have taken as the main sample of such criticisms a lead article by Soumitra Das, 'Fair is Foul' in *The Telegraph*, Arts and Ideas Supplement, Calcutta, 19th January 1996

of India's Department of Culture, it first started functioning in 1954 from the premises of the National Gallery of Modern Art at New Delhi's Jaipur House. Moving to its present premises of Rabindra Bhavan in 1961, it functioned as a forum mainly for working artists, and an encircling core of critics, scholars and office-bearers

In its list of chairpersons, in its chief publication series (monographs on contemporary Indian artists),[2] aid funds and research grants, the studios and workshops it houses in Delhi and in all its regional centres, as well as in the exhibitions it regularly holds, the Lalit Kala Akademi clearly situates itself in the modern field of Indian art. This sense of the modern, however, always has to be negotiated – always subtly differentiated – from what is merely current and contemporary. Likewise, the claims to represent the national has had to constantly sift out what it sees to be the 'best' and 'authentic' from what is merely popular and widespread

It is in the hosting of a popular event like the Kala Mela that these different faces of the modern and national came to clash. Various invisible lines of cordon that seal off spheres of 'high art' became apparent, here, only through their transgression. Other exhibitions held by the Lalit Kala, like the much acclaimed international Triennales or the solo and curated shows regularly on view in the Rabindra Bhavan galleries (like the recent showing of young, *avant-garde* Indian sculptors curated by Madan Lal),[3] implicitly play out the lines of divide. Across different genres and mediums, such exhibitions map the changing terrain of our national modern art, endorsing new high art canons, staging a wide gamut of modernist and post-modernist innovations. To move from these exclusive art sites to the *melee* of the Calcutta fair grounds is to move into an entirely separate world of patronage and practice, even as the sponsoring organisation remains the same

For the Lalit Kala Akademi, the holding of mass art events as the Kala Mela, drawing on groups and regions that lie outside the metropolitan elite circles, is as much a part of its agenda as these other high-brow exhibitions. For such fairs have, over the years, become an integral feature of our national public life. Today Calcutta, like all other cities, experiences an annual winter ritual of fairs that choke all its open grounds The customary round of handloom and leather expos, handicraft and trade fairs and the mega-event of the Calcutta Book Fair keep expanding to include newer varieties each year food fairs, science fairs, HMV musicfests and folk art fairs.

It was as a part of its programme of organising artists' workshops and camps that the Lalit Kala Akademi began in 1978 the venture of these Kala Melas. The idea was to stretch out the collective activities of artists from painting, sculpting or print-making to a joint forum of quick and cheap selling. The aim was to offer 'art products' to a wide clientele and public, while preserving intact the status of those products as 'art'

The desire in all such projects was to expand the so-called artistic community, to open its boundaries to young students, aspirants and a middle class public – never to dilute or disrupt that community. Yet, clearly, the bid for a popular, public domain produced its own counter-encroachments into the hallowed spaces of modern Indian art. The Calcutta Kala Mela showed there could be no smooth or easy translation of art into the fair. Rather, it hinted at the lack of a fit between matters of scale and quality, between the designatedly 'modern' and representatively 'national' trends of art-practice in our country.

The eight Kala Melas held so far, five in the capital and the ones in Bombay, Madras and Bangalore, it seems, better preserved their 'artistic' pedigree. None excited the allegations or the kind of contempt of the art-cognoscenti that racked the Calcutta event. Yet the latter, it is said, outdid all the previous ones in the scale of the fair, its expenditure, and wide participation from all over India. The question of scale, in this case, was open to many readings it could work in varying contexts as signs of both success and debasement

A defence of the Calcutta Kala Mela by the regional secretary of the local Lalit Kala unit emphasised, among other points, the unprecedented number of participants and the overwhelming response from small groups from various parts of India [4] If each stall could not be as large as intended, it was to accommodate as many as 255 units in the given space as against the initial allocation for 150. If the display was as staid and standardised as any commercial fair (if the stalls were no different from those of the neighbouring Lexpo or handloom fair), it was because it was the only practical way of storing and exhibiting the more than 10,000 items. Numbers served as a definitive mark of the success and popularity of a fair that was intended to throw its net out as widely as possible to artists and buyers. By the same count, the presence of stalls from most Indian states and the preponderance of little known artists' groups from centres like Calcutta or Bombay, worked at establishing the image of the fair as a truly popular and national event.

The argument would follow that this 'popular' and 'national' dimension became constitutive of the event and the nature of the art on view. It is not an

2 Beginning with the monograph on N S Bendre in 1958, 57 such monographs have been published so far These complement two other main areas of publication of the Akademi the journal, *Lalit Kala Contemporary* begun in 1963, and large colour prints of works of contemporary Indian artists The *Lalit Kala Contemporary* has its partner, *Lalit Kala (Ancient)*, and the contemporary prints are accompanied by portfolios of Mughal and Pahari miniatures Still, the priorities of the institution lie distinctly with the modern genres

3 Called, 'Sculpture 1995', it was presented by Galleire Espace over three levels of the Rabindra Bhavan galleries and showed the work of 21 young sculptors from Baroda, Delhi, Santiniketan, Madras, Bangalore, Mysore and Trivandrum

4 Letter by Siddharta Ghosh, regional secretary, Rashtriya Lalit Kala Kendra, Calcutta This letter, along with two others responding to Soumitra Das' article, provides a sense of the kind of defences rallied on behalf of the Kala Mela – Letters ('Kala Blind'), *The Telegraph*, 1 February 1996

argument that the organisers and authorities would stretch out. Nor is it one that the arbiters of an alternative world of modern art would readily concede. I would see it, though, as the central issue underpinning all evaluations of the occasion: one whose relevance lies in the very difficulty of directly addressing it. What is clearly at issue, here, is the definition of what counts as art and who constitutes the artistic community? This, in turn, devolves on the definition of what qualifies as a proper modern art fair.

There were mainly two models which critics invoked in voicing their disappointment over the Kala Mela – one was Calcutta's old short-lived Market Square Fair which some of the city's leading artists began in 1969, with the support of the Calcutta Corporation; the other was Santiniketan's Nandan Mela, still held every December by students and teachers of Kala Bhavan. One prevails in Calcutta's modern art circles as the nostalgic symbol of a free-spirited, bohemian, non-official venture, reminiscent of the Parisian open-art exhibitions at Montmartre, where budgets were low, the mood aptly riotous and anarchic, where the best of artists sold their pictures at throw-away prices

The other, the Nandan Mela, like the whole institution of the Santiniketan Kala Bhavan, remains a model of spontaneity and innovation, artistic creativity and student-teacher camaraderie. Together, they can be seen to frame the anticipations of a modern art event: a frame in which the Kala Mela could only feature for what it failed to be. Such comparisons, it has been counter argued, are unjustified Once again, the national and popular scale of the Kala Mela was made the singular point of its difference And that scale, it is held, rendered pointless any comparisons drawn with small local affairs like the Market Square fair, involving only a handful of artists, or a purely campus affair like the Nandan Mela [5]

5 Letters by Siddharta Ghosh and Abhijit Gupta, *The Telegraph*, 1 February 1996

However, in differentiating the national from the local, the popular from an elite event, a basic issue is being evaded Where, in this shift, do we situate the thorny themes of 'art' and 'modernity'? Can matters of number and scale displace those of quality? Can national participation substitute for the conspicuous absence of good art and well-known artists from the ambit of the Kala Mela? Or, we may ask, are events like the Nandan Mela or this Kala Mela really that incomparable? Do they not evoke similar expectations of what a modern art fair should be, notwithstanding the differences in scope and dimension? The moot problem lies in this: while it marked its difference from smaller, local, campus art fairs, the Rashtriya Kala Mela also needed its critical signs of difference to distinguish it from the surrounding mass of consumer fairs. That line of difference has to be carefully preserved and policed; in this fair, the popular and the commercial needed to be mediated by distinct art credentials. The Kala Mela, surely, was not reducible to the Lexpo: this was a main source of indignation [6] With it, we return to the theme of the fundamental transgression that the event raised.

It is time we shifted attention from the terms of the debate (from the scene of allegations and defences) to the actual scenarios of art practices and selling that the Calcutta Kala Mela placed before us Let us try to unpack the widely acknowledged phenomenon of mediocrity Let us turn around the free-floating labels of kitsch, trash or B grade art to briefly explore the kinds of products and tastes that lie beneath. To do so would mean to acknowledge the extent to which these other practices and products fill up the space of what is national and popular While they remain the 'other' of modern Indian art, they can be seen to constantly spill over and intrude into the latter's territories. The grounds of the Kala Me provides one such site of an intrusion. Th site, it could be claimed, belonged legit mately to modern Indian art (the fiel which an institution like the Lalit Kal Akademi has come to signify), but it wa taken over by the kind of work that th field guardedly keeps out

One scenario that predominated th Calcutta Kala Mela was that of standa student practice The genres are easil recognisable, repeating themselve across the years from generation to ge eration, from one art-school to another. I every other stall, we came up with th standardised fare: still lives with draper head and figure studies, portraits, wate colour sketches and landscapes, or com positions in oil that struggle to break o of the binds of academic naturalism. Eve the modernist distortions of faces an figures, the compositional allegories alienation and suffering, or the recurre images of anguished faces and skelet bodies (our lingering legacy of 'soci realism') had a predictable pattern As d another variety of pictures and sculptur that fit into a broad category of 'ethn modern', where a range of decorati and folk-art motifs (borrowed fro *patachitras*, *madhubani* or *kalamka* pictures, Bastar metal figures or terracot statues) are pulped and rehashed Som where between these two trends, conti ues a dwindling brand of 'Oriental styl paintings, where we move from variatio on Bengal School or Jamini Roy imag to large numbers of copies of Paha miniatures.

Clearly at odds with the contemp rary modern, such works form, noneth less, an integral part of our mode history. Each of these genres play o an identifiable phase of this chequer history – from our colonial art educatio through the nationalist project of reco structing a classical Indian identity in a to the rediscoveries of folk traditions, t engagement with international moder ism and the outburst of a 'socially awar art of the '40s. This history has be accommodated within the national canc the early colonial and nationalist phas

6 This was precisely the sentiment expressed in two further letters by two of the city's prominent artists, Shyamal Dutta Roy and Dharmanarayan Dasgupta – Letters ('Artful Dodgers'), *The Telegraph*, 10 February 1996 To quote one of them, 'An art fair requires a special character Instead the Kala Mela turned out be another run of the mill fair in the city'

figuring mainly as stages to be surpassed before a more 'authentic' modern phase could emerge. But much of its products, in their proliferation and persistence into the present, cannot be as neatly fitted into the current national field of modern art They feature mainly as an embarrassing residue of this history, challenging its sense of passage and progress. In their routine-ness and repetition, such practices have remained the underlayer of the changing world of our modern art movements. While they have served as the easiest targets of negation in the articulation of new 'high art' positions, they stand as a constant reminder of the nature of our institutional modernity, of its colonial roots and its inner traps.

A legacy that squarely confronted us at the Calcutta Kala Mela was that of our colonial art education. Here, the Victoria Memorial inadvertently turned out to be quite an apposite backdrop. The irony of the imperial setting comes to us as a part of a larger historical irony The identity of the 'modern', the whole space of our modern art practice – we remember – is first produced in the premises of the art schools that came into being in the 19th century Ever since, these art schools (whatever the changes in orientation and curricula) have moulded the structure of teaching, training and livelihood in the field. The same drill of classroom and curricular work draws itself out from year to year, in the main metropolitan units like the Government School of Arts and Crafts or Rabindra Bharati University at Calcutta as much as in a host of small-town schools. The training stands fundamental to the profession, even as the making of a 'modern' self has always required a transcendence of that training. The paradox is tied to the structure of our institutional art education, whose 'colonial' and 'modern' histories are coterminous, whose main purpose had been to train copyists and draughtsmen rather than artists.

A new identity of 'artist' in modern India had to be wrested from the art schools. it was seldom endowed. Over time, it came to be negotiated partly within these schools, more often outside them – in alternative art-teaching forums that emerged in places like Santiniketan in the '30s and in Baroda in the '50s That a few schools like Santiniketan and Baroda still retain their 'alternative' standing is a reflection of what continues to prevail as the general standard of art school work.

The Kala Mela in Calcutta, as has been repeatedly stated, was the realm of all that is standard and widely practised The absence of work from Santiniketan or Baroda became symptomatic of the more general absence of the 'artistic community' that was so widely talked about and that gave the show its particular stamp Here, the avant-garde modern artist was almost totally intercepted by his/her 'other': the copyist and the craftsmen

Of the many signs of travesty at the Kala Mela, the large number of copies on sale was surely one. Copying European Old Masters still figures as a regular part of the curriculum in most schools What we encountered at the Mela, however, spilled over from the art school premises into a more untutored milieu of bazaar practices, where even the copy as a copy scarcely bothered to hold its own against accretions and corruptions

From the drill and rigour of naturalistic representation that our 19th century artists were put through, the practice of the 'copyist' has spread in diverse directions. The sites of production are as varied as the models for copy· they range from small art schools and societies that churn out ever-more distorted copies of the same Raphael, Da Vinci or Guido Reni pictures that still greet us on the staircase of the Government Art College, Calcutta; to art centres at Madras and Mysore, where copies of Ravi Varma and Bombay artists of the same genre (like Dhurandhar and Haldankar) are at a premium, to state institutions like the Himachal Pradesh Art Academy which specialise in training today's artists to make replicas of Pahari miniature paintings. This gamut of copies provided a vivid instance of the type of hybridities that pervade our everyday visual culture They showed the way selective samples of both our modern and traditional, western and Indian art heritage are available for mass manufacture.

The phenomenon also blurred the lines of divide between artists and craftsmen. another of the Mela's many transgressions The art fair threw together modern artists' groups with Midnapore *patuas* (ready to sing out their scrolls and play out their role as folk performers) or Tanjore painters (working out before spectators. their craft of encrusted gilt decorations on Krishna icons) The 'modern' status of the one asserted itself against the 'traditional' image of the other, but neither remained in any clearly defined slot Repeatedly in the fair, established hierarchies and distinctions dissolved. Printed reproductions of established 'works of art' were on sale side by side with painted copies A stall of the Bombay Art Society displayed sets of prints of 'Bombay masters', where M.V. Dhurandhar featured nonchalantly with S M. Raza and N S. Bendre, where calendar art dug its heels into the enclaves of the Bombay Progressives. In another stall from Bhuvaneswar, copies of Madonna with child, Puri *patachitras*, versions of Jamini Roy alongside versions of abstract modernism stared out from the space

This mixed fare spoke of public tastes and demands that were as eclectic, of a market that was as undiscerning as the art that was on offer. These are the genres of work which are most obviously and pervasively in demand. Even at the Mela, despite the low and adverse publicity, this art did sell As the regional secretary of the Lalit Kala Akademi pointed out, sales at the fair generated almost the same amount as what had been invested in it. The Kala Mela points, then, not just to another *milieu* of practices but also to the very different market that sustains it This market operates away from the limelight of the new art boom. the big sales and promotions, the Christie auctions, the international networks and the exclusive collections Like the productions, the market reflects the wide gap that separates it from the elite circuit of modern Indian art

The public culture in our country, today, stands increasingly polarised between the two worlds of vernacular and English medium training. The nature of each keeps shifting, as tastes travel across boundaries and new styles and persuasions lodge themselves in either camp. But the divide is irrevocable, to be continuously drawn and redrawn What we saw at the Kala Mela harked on the same dichotomy. Its scenario, one could say, was distinctly 'Bengali medium' and, as often implied in that designation, distinctly second-grade – very little of polish, positions and aspirations of the 'English medium' found a place here It represented a particular face of what we could term our 'vernacular modernities', standardised across states, at the same time feeding off local models and variations. What blocked them as a unit was only their difference – a marked difference – from the ambience of our cosmopolitan and global modernity.

We are left, in the end, facing a vast hiatus that exists between these different and disparate levels of art activities Each level plays out its claims to be national and modern, but only one gains the institutional legitimacy and authority of high art. The consecration of this authority requires that the levels be kept distant and separate, for the very status of 'high art' is premised on a critical positioning of difference. Its sophistications and innovations best bounce off this large field of routine and pedestrian productions. Its creative dialogues, necessarily exclusive and in-house, thrive through their unavailability to the bulk of those who make a profession and livelihood of art. New avant-garde appropriations of everyday objects and roadside images stand poles apart from a world which keeps unconsciously recycling its own mundane kitsch.

The problem arises when the boundaries cannot be adequately maintained, when difference tends to turn in on itself The dictionary meaning of 'hiatus' is of a 'break between two vowels coming together not in the same syllable' If it implies a coming together (the possibility of a blend), it also insists it is not in the same space. The Kala Mela, I would argue, signified a hiatus, but failed to stick to its definitive principle. Its assault lay in its inability to preserve a cardinal separation of spheres – in the way it conceded a legitimate site of the modern to its illegitimate 'others'.

The idea of the Mela itself provides a handle to the problem. It suggests in its essence a free-for-all event, a place of open exchange and curious mixes. There prevails, on the one hand, the model of bohemian and experimental modern art fairs: on the other, looms the threatening spectre of the Mela as a space of undisciplined entertainment, where there can be no quality control, no screening of the public, no tutoring of popular tastes. One is reminded here of the consternation of our early colonial art authorities about the way museum and exhibitions would be converted into fair grounds by the ignorant masses who thronged these spaces The permeation of the uneducated and the uninitiated threatened – as they still threaten – the sanctity of domains like the Indian Museum or the Victoria Memorial. And much of the same anxieties were echoed at the spectacle of Ganga Sagar pilgrims mingling with middle class shoppers in the precincts of the Calcutta Kala Mela, subverting the art event by reducing it to the sameness of any other fair.

The Kala Mela, I would conclude, stands exemplary of the travesties and excesses that make up the nation's mass culture, of the incongruities that have become an integral part of our democratic public life Let me also offer it as a possible metaphor for cultural studies in India – for a project which makes the 'popular' a central object of study but cannot contain it in its analytical frames; which rejects the baggage of the 'aesthetic' but is left groping for a counter language. Like the fair, its identity lies in the openness of its terrain. And like the Kala Mela, its crucial role has been to interrogate our modernity with its own home-grown subversions

A speculative montage

M MADHAVA PRASAD

ONE of the curiosities of our existence as a modern nation is the relative insignificance of 1950 – the year of our Revolution – as an element of the national Imaginary, compared to the overwhelming importance of 1947 – the year in which our alien rulers went home. On the earlier occasion, we achieved freedom from alien rule while on the later one we adopted what can only be termed a declaration of Revolution, the initiation of a movement to achieve freedom from ourselves, to force a rupture in the continuum of history. To be sure, the state produces a far more impressive spectacle of its might on 26 January than it does in mid-August; but our narratives of the past (and consequently, our notions of the present) hinge predominantly on the image of restored self-identity (or anxieties about the falsity or incompleteness of that restoration) associated with that midnight hour.

Although there is little hope that any of our present problems can be solved by simply shifting the emphasis from one date to the other, reading the differential significance of these two successive events as a symptom is one way of approaching a question that is fundamental to the practice of cultural studies: the question of the concept of our contemporaneity.

It is perhaps no accident that this question of what constitutes 'our time' is only beginning to be rigorously posed now, at a time when the edifices built on the assumption of and desire for self-identity are being dismantled all around us (cf. Dhareshwar). Whether we decide to employ the term or not, the necessity and possibility of what goes on in the name of cultural studies only arises within this context of a sense of the present disengaged from any obvious anchoring in any determinate past of full authenticity It comes after the cessation of the inter-civilizational agonistics that has engaged the humanities in the form of 'postcolonial studies'

This is where the differential significance of the two important dates of modern history comes into the picture. For the humanities, a disengagement from

the trauma of abandonment and separation that the signifier 1947 can be said to represent has been difficult Even the repudiation of the colonial past, in its insistent repetition, has proved to be a way of returning to dwell in that very past. It is as if the very programme of passive revolution to which other sectors and disciplines were dedicated had imposed upon the humanities the need to disavow that project The problem that surfaces here can be described as our (in)ability to historicize the *ancien regime*, to inhabit the synchronic space inaugurated by the declaration of Revolution in such a way as to render historical, to return to its proper place (without minimising its role in determining our present condition), the colonial era which otherwise dominates our consciousness falsely as the site of elaboration of our modernity

It is an extraordinary notion that the colonial era, structured as a despotism, predicated on archaic and obscurantist ideologies of authority and power (the 'rule of colonial difference' as Chatterjee has termed it), should continue to appear to us as the era of our modernity The difference at issue here perhaps amounts to no more than a shift of perspective that would result from the adoption of a fiction of self-instituted modernity As long as it seems that we were forcibly separated from our past by an alien intervening force, fantasies of a reunion continue to sustain us If, on the other hand, we take seriously the fiction implied in the inauguration of the Republic, that is to say the fiction of a radical rupture that places a distance between us and all pasts, we find ourselves with the task of thinking the present in all its complexity, without wishing away the colonial era as a determining factor Nevertheless even if the need for it is assumed to be readily apparent, this is not a shift that can be accomplished by an act of will

Cultural studies, as it has emerged into the academy today, is unthinkable without such a shift of perspective to the imperatives of the contemporary, which is not to say that history is irrelevant to it. One, somewhat simplistic way of defining cultural studies would be to say that it is a study of a specifically capitalist culture, as opposed to non-/pre-capitalist or 'traditional' forms of culture. This formulation is, however, only partially true since it reduces the object of cultural studies to some specific type of content, and encourages a sort of area-wise division, based on the presupposition that there are separable zones of culture It is well-known that culture was not invented by cultural studies, that before its advent there was already a discipline of formidable strength, anthropology, which took culture as a primary object It thus becomes imperative to state what makes the object of cultural studies different from the one proposed by anthropology as well as the one assumed by literary criticism to be its particular burden However, it is insufficient to answer by invoking the emergence of a different and separate zone of culture that falls outside the purview of anthropology

A more accurate definition would be that cultural studies emerges when culture' in the sense in which it is conceived traditionally, whether by the discipline of anthropology or in the realm of commonsense, is no longer recoverable in a pure state In the Indian context, two spheres of 'culture' were conventionally recognized and their status as culture depended on a distance between them and the world of the modern The first of these is what is called 'tradition', including the Sanskritic textual tradition and contemporary practices thought to be deriving from them The other can be placed under the rubric of 'oral tradition' and includes folk, tribal and other practices that fall outside the purview of both the modern and the Sanskritic tradition. This two-fold division of culture roughly coincided with the division of labour between the two great, related disciplines of Indology and anthropology

As is well-known, the self-critique undertaken by anthropology in recent decades brought into crisis some of its basic assumptions such as the distance, especially temporal, that was assumed to separate the world of the ethnographer from his/her object of study. While ethnographic method continues to be employed in cultural studies, it can no longer be unproblematically supported by the 'allochronic' relation. Besides, the political dimension of cultural practice also came into view and it became retrospectively clear that the evacuation of politics from the objects of ethnographic study facilitated by the political subjugation of the world by European imperialism could not be sustained in the context of new political formations that emerged from the struggles against European domination.

On the other hand the rise of cultural studies cannot be explained by the crisis in anthropology alone. For that to happen, the culture that disappeared from the sites of anthropological research had to reappear in locations that were never suspected to have a cultural dimension. This is where the history of the emergence of cultural studies as a discipline in Britain acquires its significance

Stuart Hall has written a historical account of the emergence of Cultural Studies as a discipline at Birmingham. The founding texts of the discipline identified there are Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy*, Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* and *The Long Revolution* and E.P Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Hall's account lays much emphasis on the break with older definitions of culture in the humanities (Leavisian, based on notions of literary excellence); the bitter confrontation with an Americanised, 'scientific' sociology and later, the 'appropriation of sociology from within' (p. 23), the move from a literary-humanist to an anthropological definition of culture, the stress on the contemporary, on the 'lived culture' of the working classes, and the importance of the theoretical dimension to defining cultural studies as opposed to a definition based on the objects of study. Gramscian notions such as hegemony, the national-popular, and the specificity of the political instance combined with Althusserian theory of ideology provide the emergent discipline with its theoreti-

cal base Historically, the rise of the discipline is made possible by a break located in the 1960s but traced back to events in the previous decade, that is, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War

Hall rightly represents the particularities of the British historical situation in which the discipline emerged as a contingent conjuncture which need not repeat itself in every place where it is practised Thus when Hall emphasizes cultural studies' adoption of an anthropological rather than a humanities-inspired definition of culture, he is also pointing to the important role ethnography would play in the new discipline But in the Indian context, where unlike in Britain, the anthropological definition of culture has shared the space with the other definition and has indeed been responsible for notions of an unchanging cultural substance, a stress on the contemporary, on the political dimension of cultural practices and so on, requires a break with the 'eternalising' habits of anthropology. In the context Hall is describing, the existence of the contemporary was not at issue, only its worthiness to be called culture In our context, efforts to theorise the contemporary face a formidable opposition from entrenched eternalists and essentialists

However, there is another dimension, not explicitly taken up by Hall but present in his account in a concealed form, which is of relevance to us as we try to think of the future of this discipline in India We can track this by beginning with Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, acknowledged as one of the founding texts of the discipline and his inaugural lecture, 'Schools of English and Contemporary Society'. In the lecture, as described by Hall, Hoggart conceived Cultural Studies as being concerned with '"neglected" materials drawn from popular culture and the mass media' (p 21) It conceived the aim of such study as the identification of 'qualitative cultural evidence' in these materials by using literary-critical methods As Hall puts it, its conservatism 'may have reflected that historical compromise required to get these illicit questions posed at all' (p 21) However, that did not prevent hostile reactions to this venture from sociology, which then in Britain was in the grip of American inspired scientism, and laid claim to the field that cultural studies was encroaching on, insisting on the pre-eminence of its own 'scientific' methods and quality control. While sociology was worried about encroachment, there was objection to the elevation of the contemporary (which was regarded as by definition debased) to the status of culture from the literary critical side

The worries of sociology were not entirely unfounded because there was a crucial way in which cultural studies *was* all about encroaching on its ground, of 'appropriating it from within' The title of Hoggart's book, *The Uses of Literacy*, already suggests the emergence of a set of concerns that are situated in the world that a certain sociology takes for its object, the world of the working classes, the world of 'social problems', of norm and deviation, of functionality and dysfunction Literacy is a typical 'social problem' of the masses.

In this book, among other things, Hoggart developed the profile of a social type that he called the 'scholarship boy'. This type was to be found in that very site of intense sociological research, the working class neighbourhood, a boy or girl drawn into the programme of new literacy who did well in school and was able to enter university, presumably one of the new universities that had opened up to expand the higher education base beyond the traditional Oxford-Cambridge circuit.

Under such circumstances, it is more than likely that these boys and girls had an experience similar to one that some Indians have reported on entering the academy. If the Indians, to their horror, encountered their own objectified image in the annals of anthropology, is it not likely that a similar uncanny experience awaited the working class students when they stumbled upon sociology's images of the working class in the university? The texts of British cultural studies confirm this suspicion when they insist that working class life is not devoid of its own distinctive cultural ethos, that this cultural life is moreover not just a remnant, a survival of older 'genuine' cultures but a culture produced in and through the experience of the contemporary, within the framework of a hegemonic capitalist culture but not entirely within its control

This was, then, a culture whose concept can be said to have been produced by the scholarship boys and girls who had acquired the academic legitimacy to be able to propose a new object of study. Stuart Hall's early insistence on the primacy of theory notwithstanding, this experiential dimension has come to dominate cultural studies in Britain as critics like Angela McRobbie, Dick Hebdige and others increasingly resort to an exuberant emphasis on the radicalism of working class consumerism The experiential branch of cultural studies has enjoyed success at the expense of 'critical cultural studies', where the emphasis is on the conceptual and critical interrogation of cultural practices as manifestations of ideological struggle and domination

Turning back to the question of our own approach to cultural studies, it is clear that this discipline claims our attention in the same way that other intellectual trends in the past have done, by way of a route established in the wake of colonialism, which brings us all the latest developments and forces us to reckon with them In other words, we will look in vain here for the duplication of the same conditions that paved the way for cultural studies in Britain in the sixties Thus while there are millions of scholarship boys and girls in our modern nation, they are as yet only a group in itself, and not a group *for itself* that would be in a position to assert the validity of its field of experience as an object of inquiry Our intellectual subjectivities are still formed by the retrospective trauma of the anthropological encounter, which locates the adversary far away, in the fabled West, rather than that of sociological objectification, which brings to fore the reality of class struggle within our midst.

Film in India has always been considered a part of 'culture' in the anthropological sense. Since film will occupy an overwhelmingly important position in Indian cultural studies however conceived (although it would be unfortunate were it to dominate the field entirely), it is useful to examine how the different definitions of culture have fared in relation to this modern cultural form

Until Jadavpur University started a film studies programme recently, academic study of film was only possible under the aegis of other disciplines like economics (whence one or two studies of film as industry have emerged); literary studies, where art cinema's aesthetic affinity with literature and its dependence on novels for narrative material made possible comparative work; communications, where sociological methods were employed for the study of film as one of the mass media; and in anthropology where ethnographic method enabled the conceptualisation of the field of popular cinema as a more or less autonomous zone of culture

These were for the most part avenues for film study opened up by the initiative of individuals who, while trained in these disciplines, for whatever reasons, chose film as their area of research. The institutionalisation of cinema studies, involving the production of historical studies, reading practices, debates over trends and achievements and so on, was mainly undertaken by independent writers, journalists, filmmakers, film societies, and teachers in government sponsored institutions (*The Journal of Arts and Ideas* is a rare instance of a forum that brought together a group of critics with diverse interests to jointly undertake an exploration of Indian modernity in the arts in general, and film in particular.)

The pedagogical aspect of this entire spectrum of activities was limited to the teaching of film appreciation, mainly to film critics and enthusiasts. Since academic study of film in India is only just beginning, it is difficult to discern any distinct research trends as yet. However, it is clear that one of the immediate tasks academic institutions must take up is to come to terms with the range of work done until now in the independent sector, as well as the work done under the aegis of other disciplines.

We note that Indological/anthropological approaches have been the most productive and have more or less dominated the field until recently Although the studies are few in number (those by Kakar and Nandy are the best known), some of the most widely accepted formulations about Indian cinema have an affinity with these approaches. These include the idea that Indian films are invariably re-tellings of Indian mythology, that they represent the viewpoint of traditional India on modernity, that they fulfill the cultural 'needs' of the masses, and so on. On the other hand, we do not lack studies which try to give cinema a high cultural definition in keeping with the ideals of the literary institution. Whatever the individual merit of studies in both these approaches, they do not situate the object in a theorised present, with its own logic and its specific history, as cultural studies would tend to do As I have argued above, this is still an approach that assumes the unsullied existence of a 'tradition', an authentic culture, outside the borders of the modern

That there are mythological elements in many, if not all, Indian films is not in doubt. Nor can it be denied that the staging of conflicts between figures symbolising tradition and modernity is a constant feature of Indian popular cinema. But whether this indicates the self-regenerating power of myth or the enunciative primacy of tradition depends on the paradigm one inhabits A cultural studies predicated on the irreversibly modern character of our present would not deny the existence of these elements. It would instead ask the question, 'What is it about our modernity that makes such affirmations of tradition, such an insistent reenactment of myth indispensable to its existence?' Which is another way of posing the question of 'our time', the concept of the present, which is above all a political question.

Film studies thus shares the problems as well as possibilities identified for cultural studies in general. It seems to me that if the study of culture is not to carry on in the old ways, with the established assumptions about culture inherited from the classical disciplines, it is imperative to define the new discipline by reference, not to its objects of study, but to the locus of enunciation, and to its pedagogical task, which consists in the education of citizen-subjects to read their increasingly complex surroundings critically and to engage with the world as critical, politically conscious subjects.

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Action groups and the state

MANGESH KULKARNI

ANY adequate account of India's changing political landscape must give due weightage to the rise of new voluntary agencies (VAs). Of particular importance are those VAs which have been designated as non-party political formations or action groups (AGs). In turn, the evolving state-society dialectic is the appropriate setting for a correct assessment of the long-term significance of these forces.

As an offspring of the mass-based freedom struggle, and as an agent of planned development, the Indian state enjoyed considerable popular legitimacy and stability during the two decades after Independence. The sturdy administrative structure inherited from the British, and the constitutionally installed democratic institutions seemed to function smoothly. The Congress, which controlled the governmental apparatus, successfully mediated between the state and civil society. Blessed with able and charismatic leaders, the Congress used various inclusionary devices to accommodate the demands of other parties and oppositional movements.[1] It also enabled the ruling classes – industrial capitalists, rich farmers, white collar workers and professionals – to maintain their domination through mutual adjustment and strategic alliances with large lower class/ethnic groups.[2]

In the emerging ethos, the voluntary sector, which had earlier sustained remarkable experiments in various fields such as education, social reform and rural reconstruction, lost its *élan* and breadth of perspective. VAs became mere appendages of the state, largely geared to narrowly defined charitable and welfare functions. Their activities were consequently centered on politically insignificant concerns, and acquired a pronounced status-quoist bias. The first five year plan document defined the state-VA relationship as follows:

> A major responsibility for organizing activities in different fields of social welfare like the welfare of women and children, social education, community organizations etc., falls naturally on private voluntary agencies... and the State should give them the maximum cooperation in strengthening their effort. Public cooperation through these social service organizations is

1 See Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India* Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1970

2 See Pranab Bardhan, *The Political Economy of Development in India.* Blackwell, Oxford, 1984

capable of channeling private efforts for the promotion of social welfare.[3]

In keeping with this approach the Government of India created the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953 to aid and assist VAs. It is interesting to note that in addition to assisting already existing agencies, the Board also helped establish several new ones [4] Thus the nexus between the state and the voluntary sector was consolidated.

The late 1960s marked a new phase in the development of the state and civil society in India. The statist project of development seemed to have run out of steam, the institutional structure was beginning to crack up, and the Congress was losing its unity and hegemony. The subaltern strata were becoming restive, while the ruling classes were finding it increasingly difficult to contain them by using constitutional means The Naxalite, Dalit Panther and Navnirman movements resulted from this breakdown of the legitimacy of the state The attempt to defuse the crisis through the authoritarian device of the Emergency fueled anti-establishment political and social action. As a result of this ferment in civil society, the voluntary sector too was re-energised, and witnessed the emergence of a new breed of VAs which moved beyond the staid welfarism of their traditional counterparts [5]

The new VAs which emerged in the 1970s may be divided into two broad categories (*i*) Development groups focusing on the socio-economic betterment of the target population by experimenting with new and more effective strategies of promoting education (Kishore Bharati, Madhya Pradesh), community health (Comprehensive Rural Health Project, Maharashtra), as also agricultural and watershed development (Social Work Research Centre, Rajasthan), and (*ii*) Action Groups geared to a militant pursuit of social justice by waging struggles against all forms of oppression and exploitation plaguing the poor They showed a readiness to directly confront the power elite and state power itself, in an attempt to alter the relations of production in favour of the oppressed AGs have therefore been the most significant and controversial segment of the voluntary sector in political terms. Prominent examples include Shramik Sanghatana and Bhoomi Sena of Maharashtra, Chhatra Yuva Sangharsha Vahini (Bihar) and Dasholi Gram Swaraj Sangh (U P.).

The Action Groups showed a rare sensitivity to the heterogeneity of the sources and structures of exploitation and oppression. This involved an awareness of class, caste, tribe and gender as interconnected but independent generators of power asymmetries which could not be mechanically reduced or assimilated to a single causative factor. Hence the AGs' preoccupation with social strata such as small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, traditional artisans, dalits and tribals. It also explains their openness to concerns like environmentalism and empowerment of women which played a negligible role in mainstream political discourse

The leadership of AGs chiefly included youth, often highly educated and of urban, middle class origin They believed in the value and efficacy of global thinking and local action Though individually confined to a small locality, these groups therefore functioned with a broad understanding of socio-political transformation. They obliterated the customary distinction between constructive work and agitational activity as both were woven into a wider programme of education, empowerment and development Unlike the discourse of the mainstream left, that of AGs rejected vanguardism and emphasised the importance of participatory forms of organization

The functioning of AGs revealed a commitment to conscientisation, grassroots mobilisation and struggle on specific issues as essential prerequisites of any long-term strategy of emancipation. This contrasted markedly with the political parties' single-minded pursuit of power chiefly through electoral politics AGs practiced non-violence, partly on pragmatic grounds but often due to a sincere belief in the fundamentally evil and counter-productive character of violence. The edge of militancy was maintained through an emphasis on unarmed but persistent and uncompromising fight for the legitimate demands and rights of the oppressed.

In contrast to the 'bureaucratic' register of state agencies and the 'electoral' register of the parties, the discourse of AGs deployed a 'movement' register characterised by open-endedness and a genuinely popular orientation. Its conceptual vocabulary was therefore drawn from the rich and complex heritage of thinkers whose ideas have energised peoples' movements all over the world in the last hundred years. Marx's critique of capitalism, Gandhi's philosophy and practice of satyagraha, and Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed – all found their way into this discourse These elements were articulated in the diction of this discourse – its slogans, symbols, forms of fraternal address – in conjunction with other elements drawn from the repertoire generated by a long history of indigenous subaltern struggles The tone of this discourse was neither directorial nor didactic, it was deeply dialogical.

The discourse of AGs viewed the prevailing socio-economic system and the state as repressive mechanisms which generated multiple forms of exploitation and marginalisation. It showed to the victims of this system both the possibilities of resistance and of emancipation, if only in micro-cosmic fashion. But unlike the 'grand narratives' of conventional ideological discourse which promised the progressive realisation of a determinate telos through the historic intervention of determinate agents, it offered 'little narratives' of liberation from particular forms of oppression, and a plural notion of agency.

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3 Cited in B H Prabhavalkar and K C Kumari, *Voluntary Associations and Their Role in Local Development* All India Institute of Local Self-Government, Bombay, 1980, pp 48-49

4 Ibid , p 50

5 See S R Pandey, *Community Action for Social Justice* Sage, New Delhi, 1991, for a survey of the new VAs.

The values, concerns and tactics espoused by AGs found a sympathetic echo in the world-wide rethinking on development which was gaining momentum in the 1970s The early trust in the state as the chief engine of development in the third world was beginning to evaporate in the face of both perceived failures on the policy front and a barrage of theoretical criticism [6] The changing development discourse stressed the need to give up the trickle-down approach to poverty-alleviation in favour of a direct assault on the socio-economic and political roots of poverty. Above all, the direct participation of the poor in the development process through their own, independent organizations was considered imperative. International agencies began to energetically canvass these new concerns by means of pressure, persuasion and a liberal offer of funds

These agencies began to exhort third world states to adopt a pro-poor agenda in collaboration with AGs and other new VAs. Thus, a conference on rural development held in New Delhi in 1978 under the joint auspices of the Government of India and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific recommended·

> ... (that it was) essential to create conditions conducive to the mobilisation and organization of the rural poor. Schemes of development and decentralisation must include institutional devises to strengthen the political and material base of the poor .. the State should permit, encourage and, to the extent that it was possible to do so without compromising their independence, actively promote organizations of the rural poor [7]

The Janata government did in fact adopt a more positive attitude towards the new VAs and granted income tax exemption for donations made to the VAs for rural development programmes. Ironically, the collapse of the government also indirectly provided a boost to the voluntary sector as the disillusionment with party politics became even more widespread and voluntarism appeared to be the only option left in a dismal political scenario.

The 1980s witnessed bewildering developments in the voluntary sector. Unable to make much headway after the few initial gains, many radical agencies and movements of the previous decade succumbed to the onslaught of the local power elites, and to the middle-class activists' search for a less demanding and more stable life.[8] However, a fresh radical impulse began to flow into movements against 'development projects' that destroyed the sustenance bases of vulnerable strata and threatened large-scale displacement These movements deployed an ecological and populist discourse and are best exemplified by the Narmada Bachao Andolan At the same time, a multitude of 'professional' non-governmental organizations (NGOs) cropped up. The NGOs basked in the waxing legitimacy of the voluntary sector and throve on the growing volume of aid flowing into the sector.[9]

In this period the state responded to the sector through a two-pronged strategy The Kudal Commission hounded agencies disliked by the government during the early 1980s, the tax exemption earlier granted to VAs was withdrawn and their access to foreign funds was sought to be curbed The positive measures included the assigning of an unprecedented role to VAs in the governments rural development programme. The seventh five year plan (1985-90) document invited VAs to mobilise and organize the poor for the implementation of land ceiling and distribution of surplus land, enforcement of minimum wages to agricultural labourers, as also identification and rehabilitation of bonded labour [10] A sum of Rs 100-1500 million of plan expenditure was earmarked for use in active collaboration with VAs

In 1986 the Government of India created the Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology to channelise funds to favoured VAs The need for VAs to formulate a code of conduct was highlighted, and the pro-government lobby in the voluntary sector advocated the setting up of a statutory council for the enforcement of the code The proposal attracted a good deal of flak and was eventually given a quiet burial What these initiatives betrayed was an attempt to bind the VAs to the state by means of a corporatist regime tilting towards the latter

Throughout the 1980s the growing critique of the state was articulated to a worldwide resurgence of a right wing politics centred on the primacy of the free market It reached a crescendo after the fall of the East European communist regimes in late 1989 During this decade many third world states had to swallow the bitter pill of the free market ideology as the IMF and the World Bank made financial assistance conditional upon the implementation of a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) geared to the opening up and marketisation of the economy In July 1991 India too committed itself to such a programme by accepting a loan from the IMF to overcome a fiscal crisis The conditionalities were by then acceptable to the Indian ruling classes as they dovetailed with their own diagnosis of what had gone wrong with

6 See Bishwapriya Sanyal, *Cooperative Autonomy The Dialectic of State-NGOs Relationship in Developing Countries* International Institute of Labour Studies, Geneva, 1994

7 *Rural Development Administration in India* ESCAP, Bangkok, 1979, p 75

8 This is not to say that new AGs did not emerge in the 1980s For a discussion of two AGs which came to the fore in this decade, see Mangesh Kulkarni, 'The Political Dynamics of Action Groups in Rural Maharashtra' in *Politics in Maharashtra* by Usha Thakkar and Mangesh Kulkarni (eds) Himalaya, Bombay, 1995

9 Approximately 90% of this aid comes from foreign donors Currently the annual inflow of foreign funds is estimated to be in the range of 20 to 30 billion rupees The number of rural VAs alone is to the tune of 20,000

10 *Seventh Five Year Plan 1985-90*, Vol II Government of India, New Delhi 1985 pp 68-70 The ongoing eighth five year plan (1992-97) retains the emphasis on the involvement of VAs in the rural development programme of the government See pp 35-40 of the Plan Document (Vol II)

11 See Vijay Joshi *Macroeconomic Policy and Economic Reform in India* Exim Bank, Bombay 1994

the economy and the measures needed to set it right.[11]

A well documented repercussion of the SAP is its adverse impact on the poor and marginalised strata as welfare expenditure is curtailed, subsidies are withdrawn and large-scale retrenchment is permitted.[12] This has been accepted by the World Bank only to be explained away as a mere side-effect of the transition akin to '... a "crossing of the desert", in which those who are least able to cope with the crossing require some temporary relief to tide them over.'[13] It recommends the creation of a social safety net to provide such relief. The new role assigned to VAs in this scheme of things is that of activating the safety net mechanism. They are now seen as agents of structural adjustment with a human face.[14]

This changed perception of the international agencies and the Indian state has also found an echo in the voluntary sector, and many VAs are now geared to lobbying with the government under the rubric of 'social advocacy'.[15] But many AGs have reacted differently to the new dispensation by vowing to intensify their struggle against the onslaught of what they perceive as 'destructive development' They have joined forces under the banner of the National Alliance of People's Movements.[16]

The theoretical debate as to the long-term political and ideological significance of AGs began in the early 1980s when Rajni Kothari and his confreres sought to project them as harbingers of an emancipatory transformation Kothari saw them as groups engaged in an alternative mass politics in a non-party, non-governmental space at a time when the state had ceased to be an instrument of liberation and had turned oppressive through technocratic and fundamentalist perversions. He hoped that AGs would contribute to efforts '...at once more radical and more realistic to transform the nature of the State through a sustained step-wise strategy, in the process, redefining its role and recasting its structure.'[17]

Kothari's contention that AGs intervene constructively in civil society is basically correct. By lodging themselves in the interstices of civil society, left untouched or further contaminated by parties and the government, they have fought the dominant classes on behalf of the oppressed and the excluded. By mobilising and empowering sizable sections of the subjugated strata, AGs have deepened and broadened the basis of democracy in the country. By extracting a number of economic benefits from the government and through various development schemes, they have strengthened the resource base of the poor.

The achievements of AGs must, however, be viewed against their severe limitations which belie Kothari's hope that they would change the state for the better. Most of them were centred on an individual or a small group of leaders; many of them turned out to be short-lived and been effective only in certain pockets of the vast rural hinterland. Their growing dependence on governmental and foreign funds is a matter of concern. Above all, they failed to build a united front of the various oppressed strata and to give an alternative direction to the dominant political economy of development in the country. This is particularly evident through their ineffectiveness in resisting the anti-poor components of the New Economic Policy

In marked contrast to Kothari's assessment was the critique advanced by the CPM ideologue Prakash Karat. He took AGs to task for their attack on the mainstream left, and their 'petty bourgeois idealism' He pointed an accusing finger at their financial dependency and even cited instances of their involvement in nefarious activities such as fueling fissiparous tendencies in sensitive border areas. Theoretically, the most important charge leveled by Karat was that AGs were essentially instruments of a joint design of imperialist and indigenous capitalist forces to impose limited bourgeois reforms from above on Indian society. '...the bourgeoisie's need for agrarian reform...cannot be accomplished "democratically", so the ruling classes with imperialist support seek to technocratically develop it through the voluntary organisations.'[18]

Karat is right in arguing that AGs do not effectively transcend the horizons of the bourgeois order. Their efforts to enlighten and empower the people are frequently geared to no more than a translation of the officially held out values and promises into practice. Their concrete achievements have been largely confined to a partial accomplishment of such ele-mentary reforms as the abolition of forced labour, minimum wages for workers in the agricultural and unorganized sector, and restoration of alienated tribal or dalit lands. But the demonology with which Karat surrounds AGs is paranoid It is clearly a product of partisan polemics rather than of analytical perspicacity Contra Karat, not even a significant majority of them can be described as stooges of the Indian state or of capitalist and imperialist forces except in a vulgar functionalist sense.

Kothari's neo-pluralism as well as Karat's orthodox Marxism fail to offer an adequate understanding of the nature and potential of AGs. A more promising theoretical framework may be found in the writings of post-Marxist scholars like

12 See *Structural Adjustment Who Really Pays?* Public Interest Research Group, Delhi, 1992

13 Lionel Demery and Tony Addison, *The Alleviation of Poverty Under Structural Adjustment* The World Bank, Washington D C , 1987, p 1.

14 See Richard Jolly, 'Poverty and Adjustment in the 1990s', in John Lewis et al , *Strengthening the Poor What Have We Learned?* Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 1988

15. See Sadanand Varde, 'The Relevance of Advocacy in the Indian Context', *The Radical Humanist*, December 1994

16 See Rajni Bakshi, 'Development, Not Destruction Alternative Politics in the Making', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 3 February 1996 This movement has its origin in the Narmada Bachao Andolan, see Usha Thakkar and Mangesh Kulkarni, 'Environment and Development The Case of the Sardar Sarovar Project', *South Asia Bulletin*, Fall 1992

17 Rajni Kothari, *Politics and the People In Search of a Humane India*, Vol II Ajanta, Delhi, 1989, p. 406

18 Prakash Karat, *Foreign Funding and the Philosophy of Voluntary Organizations* National Book Centre, New Delhi, 1988, p 63

Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe and Stuart Hall.[19] In this perspective, power relations in society are so structured that a single individual can be the bearer of a multiplicity of relations and be dominant in one while subordinated in another. Hence it is necessary to conceptualise the social agent as constituted by an ensemble of 'subject positions' that are constructed by a diversity of discrete and dynamic discourses. The 'identity' of such a multiplex subject is consequently always contingent, precariously fixed at the intersection of various subject-positions and dependent on particular modes of identification.

Such an approach is extremely important for theorising contemporary popular struggles whose '. central characteristic is that an ensemble of subject positions linked through inscription in social relations, hitherto considered apolitical, have become loci of conflict and antagonism and have led to political mobilisation.'[20] A counter-hegemonic project of radical democracy can be realised through the establishment of a chain of equivalence among the different struggles. AGs need to be located onto such a wider terrain constituted by the struggles of labourers, peasants, tribals, dalits/bahujans and women [21] They can transcend their limitations only by contributing to the creation of an equivalent articulation between the demands arising out of these struggles.

This in turn requires a theory of the state understood as the site where different discourses of power are condensed and transformed into a systematic practice of regulation and normalisation in society.[22] Nothing less than a re-imagining of citizenship and political community is at stake.

19 See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* New Left Books, London, 1985, and Stuart Hall. 'Signification, Representation, Ideology Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates' in James Curran, David Morley and Valerie Walkerdine (eds). *Cultural Studies and Communication* Arnold, London, 1996

20 Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* Verso, London, 1993, p 77

21. For a mapping out of this terrain see Gail Omvedt, *Reinventing Revolution New Social Movements and the Socialist Tradition in India* M E Sharpe, New York. 1993

22. See Stuart Hall, op cit , pp 12-13

Books

INTERROGATING MODERNITY: Culture and Colonialism in India edited by Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir and Vivek Dhareshwar. Seagull Books, Calcutta, 1993.

IT WOULD seem to be a bit late in the day to review a book that is three years old. In the case of Interrogating Modernity, however, it would be reasonable enough to say that it represents one of the first efforts to put together an anthology of cultural studies in India. Other volumes sharing authors, methodological and political concerns materialized earlier, but these were devoted to literature – *The Lie of the Land* edited by Rajeswari Sundar Rajan (1991) and *Rethinking English* edited by Swati Joshi (1991). The present volume is broader in its scope, taking in varieties of visual culture, the culture of science, historical and contemporary public events while focusing on literature and translation.

The approaches gathered in this volume were produced between 1983-1993 and constitute something in the way of a post-Marxist generation of writing. By post-Marxist here I mean a terrain which has been shaped in certain fundamental ways by Marxist categories, especially of material and ideological analysis, but one undergoing critique and revision because of the emergence of a number of new political imperatives and methods. It would be safe to say that the questions this collection asks would not have been raised by the Marxist left of the 1970s. Modernity itself would not have been interrogated by them, they would only question the ways colonialism blocked or distorted the development of modernity. Here, on the other hand and contrary to a number of other currents in the contemporary critique of it, modernity is not rejected or seen to be irreparable. Instead, its history is scrutinized for those signs of power, founded on new technologies and forms of communication, including those of political and cultural representation, that define the terms of identity.

In the editors' view, archaic (monumental, ancient) connotations of culture, and anthropological ones – pertaining to structured, organic, traditional forms – need to be

displaced by attending to questions of signification. The focus is on how images, sounds and words are combined in meaningful ways – a common enough semiotic field of contemporary cultural analysis. If the cultural studies enterprise is viewed as interdisciplinary and politically inspired, what is important is not just the focus on 'new' objects and methods of analysis, but in placing these objects within larger projects of social and political transformation.

Thus we are invited to reflect on how the particularity of visual or auditory construction, of linguistic syntax and verbal figuration, constitute mental and perceptual mechanisms central to the formation of society If you like, we are invited to take ideology from the blandness and directness of its location within political and institutional discourse and develop a more mediated sense of its expression in a host of cultural practices.

Crucial here would be not the 'results' of a semiotic process, but the very possibilities of its formation. Not only are we made to ask what that means, we are encouraged to enquire, what are the choices and difficulties involved in putting images, sounds and words together in that way? Thus Geeta Kapur's assertion that her object in analysing a film such as Prabhat Studio's devotional Sant Tukaram (1936) is not only to uncover nationalist ideological operations but to consider its construction at the level of 'aesthetics proper'. Or Ashish Rajadhyaksha's method, in his pioneering essay on Phalke, of identifying a certain layering of visual practices as they are mediated by new technologies, the mechanical reproduction of popular prints, photographs and the cinema.

In these cases we may observe the identification of a particular way of staging action, depicting scenes, using words: that of frontality, or a frontal address, being the mode for a particular construction of meaning, and one that is then repositioned in relation to the dynamics of a new technology of representation Here Rajadhyaksha places these observations in terms of the way in which audiences are positioned to regard the cinematic image. The image composes a spectacle of the divine or of familiar mythical narrative in a way which both addresses the spectator as dislocated consumer of this new regime of mechanized image and seeks to neutralize the disturbances of that dislocation by highlighting a directness of address and reception.

There is a larger historical resonance mobilized in these writings, as for example, how the saint film connects with Gandhi's historical articulation of notions of faith and uplift in the 1930s, and in the swadeshi implications of Phalke's institution of the industry of the moving image. This suggestive matching of the study of narrative forms with the negotiation of social and political transformations isn't always so successfully configured, as for example in the essays on photography and popular Hindi film

In the first, R Srivatsan dwells too extensively on general principles of the analysis of the visual, rather than on problems posed by its mechanical relay within particular cultural circumstances. There is also a tendency when analysing, say, a news photograph or a mythological teleserial, to read the immediately legible, ideologically coded image, rather than to work out the conventions of representation within which it is produced. Problematic in a different way is the article by Somnath Zutshi on the popular cinema; after a lengthy account of the ideological construction of Indian nationhood along gendered and Hindu communal lines in the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and a host of others, cinema, the ostensible object of the essay comes across as the inevitable vehicle of this larger narrative, and therefore somewhat redundant.

In terms of the literary and the linguistic, we have five essays in the anthology. The most intricate of these is Kumkum Sangari's analysis of the marvellous realism of Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Salman Rushdie. One would be hard-pressed to summarize this article, woven as it is around what, for want of a more elegant term, one could call a semiotics of social formation. Here the narrative strategies are seen to combine and reflect upon the different types of story-telling characteristic of the social formation, and the forms of subjectivity they construct. There is a very determined attempt here to wrest these writers from that caesura around meaning which Sangari sees arising from the post-modernist impasse. (I am sure there might be a *riposte* possible here, arguing that certain currents in post-modernist thought aren't at all inimical to the project Sangari herself undertakes.)

The question that occurs to me is how we can put this complex sense of narrative form back together in the material form of the book as it moves in markets, libraries and reading constituencies. As a problem in method, part of the answer is provided by Susie Tharu and K. Lalitha's work on the career of an 18th century poem, *Radhika Santwanam*, by the *ganaki* Muddupalani, which another ganaki, Bangalore Nagaratnamma, reprinted in 1910. This re-publication aroused the ire of a middle class who objected to the poem's eroticism, leading to its ban. Although the ban was lifted by the post-independence government, the poem itself sank into obscurity and inaccessibility This story about a poem is also a story of the collusions of colonial authority with the male votaries of social respectability and gender prohibition, and, finally, about the limits of a nationalist politics of culture in reversing these currents. Suggestive too, in terms of outlining the context of cultural production, is Shivarama Padikkal's essay on the novel. Padikkal points to a series of regional contexts and distinct thematic variations – around questions of social reform, revivalism, and nostalgia – in the production of a middle class narrative form.

In these essays we are presented with another problem – the absenting of the text itself as a serious object of scrutiny, in favour of the sociological and political frames which locate it. Both the poem and novel tend to disappear. In Padikkal's essay, while there is a gesture to

understanding how the novel as a western genre was reworked though pre-novelistic forms, there is an insistence that the middle class functions of the new form ensured that 'the problems of other classes, their perspectives on their society, and their multiple traditions have all become silent in history'. It does not require a Bakhtin to tell us that the subordination of others inevitably necessitates some account of their voice, a process often replete with problems in the work of constructing social difference

Something of this univocal analysis colours P. Sudhir's argument that the colonial generation of Telugu grammars and dictionaries drained language of any richness of significance in order to fit it to the needs of rule. Relatedly, Tejaswini Niranjana seeks to recover the more complicated senses of reality, of aesthetic form and of notions of difference that have been flattened into homogenizing and othering impulses in colonial practices of translation. While I am sure these arguments are important, I recall here the moments of excess, on non-functionality that the Andhra social historian V Ramakrishna pointed to in a cultural history workshop at Jawaharlal Nehru University in 1990. in certain instances, colonially authorized dictionaries proved more complicated in capturing a range of meaning than those of their indigenous, middle class successors.

Perhaps the two essays on sati, by Lata Mani and Rajeswari Sundar Rajan, could be said to elaborate the problem of translation as well, by converting the material of one linguistic construction to show that it provides the wherewithal for quite a different ordering of meaning. Thus Mani analyzes European eyewitness accounts of sati to develop a sense of the mind-set and, indeed, rationality of the widow. Here suicide motivated by evaluations of a destiny of marginality and stigmatization surface from the flames, as do various ways of talking about the European self. the way the male gaze constructs an exoticized other, but also, narcissistically, in the register of the fascinated vision of a female sublimation into the male self

Sundar Rajan, on the other hand, emerges with what could be called a productive caesura around the problem of translation that of the impossibility of translating the moment of pain into language. She uses in a modified, critical way Elaine Scarry's work on the body in pain to suggest how aspects of subjectivity concealed by discourses of victimhood and agency can be addressed to provide a new way of thinking about intervention

Notwithstanding the subtlety and eloquence of this argument, I am unsure where it finally leads us. Nor is it always clear as to how the author's ways of looking at sati through a variety of representations – posters, cinematic fiction and documentary – orient us either in terms of a politics of intervention, or in alerting us to the varieties of meaning-making that constitute us in relation to the event. Here we may be entering a terrain where the spread of regularities of discursive formation and contestation across different practices obscures the particular work of meaning, including the soliciting of social constituencies, that these practices encourage. (A similar problem surfaces in Geeta Kapur's juxtaposition of Sant Tukaram with Ray's Devi (1960). Within the larger productivity of the interdisciplinary reconstruction of objects, it is as well to remember their specificity, and the different ways social groups are implicated in the work of meaning.

Ravi S. Vasudevan

CONSUMING MODERNITY: Public Culture in Contemporary India edited by Carol A. Breckenridge. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996

'Modernity is now everywhere, it is simultaneously everywhere, and it is interactively everywhere '

With this formulation Arjuna Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge challenge the established wisdom about modernity and modernization.

They claim, modernity is not necessarily homogenising and modernisation is not a 'single destination' journey According to them, most cultures have means for 'local production of modernity' and possess understandings of modernity which allows them to negotiate pristine, paradigmatic Euro-American modernities. Any understanding of the global experience of modernity must involve understanding of such locally produced and consumed modernities.

This awareness informs their project to unravel the public modernity in India, as well as all the essays collected in this book. In their very significant introductory essay – Public Modernity in India – Appadurai and Breckenridge provide a conceptual tool for localised entry in the global realities of modernities. They invoke the 'general category public culture'.

Habermas characterised the 20th century public sphere as one which involved a movement 'from a public critically reflecting on its culture to one that merely consumes it', reducing the distance between the public and the private and creating a depoliticised public sphere dominated by mass media.

The authors are uncomfortable with the Frankfurt school's formulation of mass media as mere instruments of class domination. Following Foucault, they are aware that all discursive formations are implicated in the structures of knowledge and power For them, consumers of mass-mediated cultural forms are not mere recipients; they actually shape the images, icons and spectacles through their complex experiences of modernity. This involves 'subjectivity, agency, pleasure and embodied experience'.

To deal with such simultaneity they define public culture as 'a set of arenas that have emerged in a variety of historical conditions and that articulate the space between domestic life and the projects of the nation-state – where

different social groups (clases, ethnic groups, genders) constitute their identities by their experience of mass mediated forms in relation to the practice of everyday life' The term *public culture* thus allows us to 'describe not a type of cultural phenomenon by a *zone* of cultural debate.'

To approach the contestations between various cultural expressions, the intentions of the state, the desires of middle classes and interests of the commercial sector, they privilege 'consumption as an activity and a modality of social life.' Consumption here is conceived as 'the work of the imagination'

The contributors to this volume use these two general categories – Public Culture and Consumption – to understand the formulation of public culture in India through the analysis of such embattled 'sites' as cricket, tourism, food, cinema and museums.

Arjuna Appadurai weaves yet another tale about the Indianisation of cricket Ashis Nandy has characterised cricket – given its underlaying mythical structures – as an Indian game, accidentally discovered by the British. Appadurai goes beyond this, though he does not invalidate Nandy's insights. He traces the genealogy of cricket in India, the organisation of 'communal' teams, the patronage to the sport by the Indian Princes and creation of 'Indian' teams to play the visiting national teams from England. In a perceptive section he deals with the vernacularization of cricket and the crucial interocular role that cricket commentaries, books, magazines and pamphlets in Indian languages played in translating cricket terminology and the ethos of the game. He also deals with the transformation of the sport into a spectacle and of players into meta-commodities In spite of his sharp insights, I must confess that I still prefer Ramachandra Guha's celebrations of local cricketing anecdotes and mythologies

Barbara Ramusack focuses on the transformation of Rajput Princes of Rajasthan into a fantasy, which enables middle class Indians and Euro-Americans to 'live like Maharajas'. The folklore about Rajput princes goes back to the days of tiger hunts and colonial histriography What intrigues her is the efforts of the Indian Republic to package India in 'discreet, comprehensive units' to foreign and, by extension, to Indian middle class tourists. According to her, 'three main foci emerged: Mughal India as seen in Delhi and Agra; Hindu India viewed in Benaras and Khajuraho; and princely India, concentrated on the Rajput trio of Jaipur, Udaipur, and Jodhpur with more extensions to Bikaner and Jaisalmer.'

The Rajput mythology – actively created by the agencies of the state, the former princes and the writers of travelogues – reduces the diversity of 'Native princely states' to Rajasthan The mythology is further layered by the representation of Rajputs as defenders of traditions – first against Islam and later against the modernising impulse of the colonial encounter. The conversion of palaces and *havelis* into hotels with luxurious conveniences, 'where the erstwhile ruler may make an occasional appearance', the creation of palace museums, trains like 'The Palace on Wheels' and high-priced Indian wardrobes enjoin to turn Indian Princes into fantasies.

In a delightful essay – Dining out in Bombay – Frank Conlon traces the emergence of public dining and describes 'aspects of that city's contemporary restaurant scene associated with an emerging Cosmopolitan Culture'. In this story he celebrates the 'First Class Tiffin and Billiard Rooms', emergence of public dining at clubs, the institution of *dabbawalas*, the *khanavals* and *bhatiyarkhanas* for migrant male workers, the wonderful Irani cafes with their 'family cabins' and didactic code of conduct immortalised by Nissim Ezikiel, Udipi and Gujarati restaurants and the popularity of Oriental – as in Chinese – food. But, he has somehow missed the great innovation of Bombay – some credit must also be given to Ahmedabad – the Jain hamburgers and Jain pizzas

The other essays in this volume – on morality play in Indian films, the management of AIR, the crafts museum and construction of the body in Indian martial arts – interrogate the 'prismatic structures of modernity' and the peculiar shapes assumed by them due to the inflections of 'cultural and historical trajectories they bring to the present'

This volume formalises the emergence of a new arena of intellectual enquiry – the public culture One need no longer be uncomfortable with the popular: it is a site to be examined, understood and celebrated. But, in this 'zone of contestations and cannibalization' of cultural registers, the other forms of politics, and 'those who cannot afford the price of entry into this world and those who prefer to remain outside it' are likely to be further marginalised. This volume fails in this respect. The contributors appear indifferent to the fates of those who cannot afford the price of the spectacle.

Tridip Suhrud

SYLLABLES OF SKY: Studies in South Indian Culture in Honour of Velcheru Narayana Rao edited by David Shulman. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995.

'...Poet, critic, cultural historian, translator, encyclopaedist, folklorist, film-maker, inspired teacher, iconoclast and enfant terrible ...'

This is how David Shulman chooses to inscribe V Narayana Rao, in honour of whose catholic capacities, this volume is lovingly dedicated Associated for many years with the South Asian Studies Department, Madison, Wisconsin, where he received his professional education, Narayana Rao (fortunately for us) never forgot his village childhood in Andhra. Steeped in the versatile magic of oral tradition, the young Rao learnt his craft early, through the medium of diverse gurus – 'three Brahmin widows', his *pauranika*-poet father and a non-Brahmin farmer to men-

tion only a few! Indeed it is to his own life-story that Narayana Rao could have been referring when he remarked, 'anything regarded as faet exists in many variants; fictions on the other hand are definitive' (p. 2). The new literary alchemy that resulted from these interactions, according to Shulman, connected Telugu poetry and society in an entirely revolutionary way.

Commemorating this 'paradigm shift' are 14 essays divided into four (rather disappointing prosaic) sections: South Indian Folklore and Literary Theory; Classical Literature; Anthropology/Religion and South Indian history and History of Art. The imaginative reader is strongly recommended to look for common themes for gender and identity, religious myth and practice, authority and archetype which weave groups of essays together across conventional, disciplinary and chronological boundaries The absence of an editorial introduction, not to Narayana Rao and his ongoing life and work but to the essays themselves, is, I am afraid, critically felt here particularly because of the heavy burden of detail a volume such as this invariably carries along with it.

Except for the magic touch of the late A.K. Ramanujan who never lets the story overwhelm the telling and vice-versa, the majority of the contributors are specialist fare As indeed they should be in an academic volume such as this one. But still, a good introduction would have been invaluable in enhancing the availability of the book for those of us who stand outside the 'charmed circle' of Narayana Rao's colleagues, peers, students and admirers who also happen to be its contributors!

In his opening essay, A.K. Ramanujan reveals the deceptively simple truth of the 'gender of the genre' through a class of Kannada folktales which 'lets the woman speak' in both the formal and contextual sense. Stuart Blackburn follows, investigating animal-husband tropes in Indian folktales which lay bare the anxieties of male sexual identity. B. Krishnamurti talks next of the definite move towards the modern (written) classical standard of Telugu literary criticism as against the earlier written *and* oral tradition.

The irrepressible Wendy Doniger leaves us awe-struck with her examination of the incredibly complex motifs of splitting and doubling in Telugu myths of sexual masquerade which paradoxically help us arrive at the understanding of the 'essence' of a person. Taking up the humanist component of this problem, David Shulman examines the relatively ignored Andhra myth of Manu, the First Man, in order to bring out the 'active, heroic and magical potentialities' of what it means to be human.

George L. Hart examines the 'archetypal' character of Indian classical *bhakti* literature which instructs through suggestion and example rather than didacticism. Paula Richman throws light on an unusual class of bhakti literature which draws upon the parent-child bond for its religious symbolism, found (with important variations of course) amongst Hindu, Christian and Muslim Tamil speakers equally.

David M. Knipe examines the 'folk theodicy' of the cult of Sani (Saturn) in South East India which brings out not only the inevitability of suffering but how best to negotiate it through 'devotion, transferal and propitiation'.

Joyce B. Flueckiger shifts focus to the written word in her piece on a woman healer of Tamil Nadu who as a devout Muslim roots her powers in the reading of the sacred text, in sharp contrast to her uneducated husband who plays an entirely secondary role. Don Handelman takes us on a fascinating voyage of discovery and transformation of gender and caste identity through the various ritual 'guises' of the cult of goddess Gangamma near Tirupati

Sanjay Subrahmanyam examines the changing nature of 'pre-orientalist', 16th-17th century Christian literature on the Tirupati 'pagoda' which represented an eastern Eldorado or 'milch-cow' for the West. Cynthia Talbot argues for a re-examination of the relation between gender and political authority by taking up the case of Rudramadevi, a forgotten queen of the Kakatiya dynasty of 13th century Andhra And finally, Philip B. Wagoner examines local textual and archaeological sources on 12th-14th century temples in Andhra, to unearth the distinctive ethical and aesthetic norms for building public shrines on the one hand and private lineage shrines on the other.

Quite clearly, these essays live up to the beautiful yet evanescent vision of the word, referred to in the title of the book *Syllables of Sky* written by the 16th century Telugu poet Dhurjati. But need this be a sky visible only over South Asia?

For a volume which dedicates itself to the universal validity of South Asian 'folk' literary criticism, there is unfortunately no attempt to experiment with its theories and methods on non-South Indian data. Contributors like Ramanujan, Hart and Subrahmanyam at least seem appraised of the problem but most other contributors are blissfully unaware of the larger politics and truth of the book. The need to distinguish between authority and authorisation, audiences and critics, genres and genders in the validation of texts – a message so eloquently propounded by the book – appears to have been meant for the readers alone – all South 'Asianists' if not South Asians?

Amrit Srinivasan

CRITICAL EVENTS by Veena Das. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1995

I FOUND myself strangely moved and in a sense, dislocated by this book. Coming from the discipline of Political Studies as I do, it is at once exhilarating and humbling to engage with overwhelmingly 'political' events from such a radically different perspective, that of the anthropologist. In the

process, to paraphrase Das' own understanding of her endeavour, these old objects of political analysis, 'being asked to inhabit unfamiliar spaces, acquire a new kind of life'(1).

Setting out to answer the question 'what mode of being does an anthropologist possess in the contemporary world?' (197), given that the anthropological enterprise is no longer the close tie between the anthropologist and her village or tribe, Das arrives at the strategy of 'substituting time for space' (198), and taking as her objects of analysis the moments she calls 'critical' in the life of a nation. Apparently, there are no specific criteria which have governed the inclusion or exclusion of events, for Das makes it clear that there are other events that could be considered equally critical but which have been omitted simply because they cannot all be addressed in one book.

The events and the related issues are: Partition – the sexual and reproductive violence on women at this founding moment of two nations; Shah Bano and Roop Kanwar – how communities construct themselves as political actors, and the discourse produced around cultural rights and the control over memory; Sikh terrorism – how communities produce violent individuals through strategic remembering and forgetting; Bhopal – how judicial and medical discourse appropriates the suffering of the victims through the functions of the state, and the theodicy through which the bureaucracy, law and medicine maintain legitimacy in the face of massive human suffering.

What was fascinating and insightful for me was the emergence of the complex contours of these events through the twin grids of Memory and Pain, rather than through those of Political Economy, State or Power, because all these events are equally and more familiarly, amenable to a reading through the latter. This is not to say that these categories are absent, but that they do not have the explanatory force in Das' reading of the events that memory and pain have. The two central themes then are, (*a*) the 'epistemological proximity of myth and history as modes of claiming the past' (136) and (*b*) the capacity of pain to create 'a moral community out of those who have suffered' (176). Between Pain and Memory emerges Community, or the memory of a collective past, constructed through the common sharing of pain.

Das sees this process as perpetually contesting the state's monopoly over values. Thus, in the case of women 'abducted' during Partition, the state could recognise only the identity of Citizen, forcibly repatriating Muslim women to Pakistan despite their pleas and the pleas of their 'abductors' and their families that they be allowed to remain. On the other hand, Das points out that community practices at the level of practical kinship were flexible enough to allow them to absorb the women. She clarifies that it is not her intention to romanticize the practices of the community, for after all it was widespread sexual violence and abduction that had propelled women outside the normal spheres of family and kinship. However, in the face of crisis, the same community showed a 'wide variety of strategic practices' that cushioned them from the consequences of this disaster.

The discussion of the Shah Bano judgment and the ensuing legislation overturning it, and of Roop Kanwar's sati, brings out once again this contest of community and state with regard to two aspects – the realm of law and the possibilities of pluralism in personal life, and the right to organise memory Both cases challenged the hegemony of the state as the only giver of values, but in addition, brought to the fore the contests between different definitions of community itself, raising two crucial question: (*a*) how does the culture of a community create a shared vision of the world which can provide a resource for questioning ideologies of the state, and (*b*) does this shared culture homogenize the community to the extent that other definitions of culture and community are silenced? This second question points to the possibility that Shah Bano and Roop Kanwar have afforded us the opportunity to interrogate male definitions of the community

Sikh militant discourse is demonstrated to be constructed on a discourse that images a community by the violent expulsion of the Other, that is, the 'feminine' Hindu and Muslim, a 'truth' which is then inscribed 'on the body of innocent victims' (136). And finally in the case of Bhopal, the community of suffering created by the victims floundered against the demand for meaning presented by the State and the Law – 'The peculiar feature of law as conversation is that it possesses subtle devices for filtering out valid arguments that are defined as "outside the purview of legal arguments" ' (73). But as Das asks us, 'should suffering always be constituted as happening in a world imbued with meaning?' (19). Indeed, she claims that in the face of such suffering, which is experienced as a contingent event, a search for meaning only gives legitimacy to the system.

Das suggests that one of the ways in which this suffering can be experienced by the anthropologist is by replacing the reifying notion of the 'gaze' with that of the 'voice' for this enables the anthropological subject to be 'transformed from third person to first person' (18). The 'voice' is expected to be more open to the fragmented and multiple character of social experience, allowing us also to raise the question not only of voices that are heard but of those that are silenced. Das' call to make the experience of suffering 'an occasion for forming one body, providing voice, and touching victims, so that their pain may be experienced in other bodies as well' (196), is one that resonates with a long tradition of inter-disciplinary feminist scholarship which has continuously challenged the objectivity imposed by the social sciences. I cannot help but be drawn to the radical possibilities suggested by such a break with the epistemological underpinnings of mainstream social analysis.

Nevertheless I am disturbed by the new reification of 'pain' that emerges – if Das would agree that the experi-

ence of 'pain' is a political and politicised process, indeed, that community formation through construction memory of shared pain is the very stuff of politics, then it is difficult to understand how she leaves unproblematised the notion of pain itself. In the 'events' that she has chosen to discuss, 'victims' and 'suffering' do appear to be clearly recognizable, but the very choice of these particular events begs the question of contested notions of pain. For instance, in a critical event that Das has not discussed here, although she wrote extensively on it at the time – the issue of job reservations on the basis of the Mandal Commission Report 'pain' was produced by two very divergent discourses. One, that of the lower castes, claiming legitimacy on the basis of historical injustice, and the other, that of the upper castes, claiming legitimacy on the basis of a contemporary injustice. In this instance it would not be immediately evident whose pain the anthropologist should 'give voice to', except on an explicitly political argument making claims about what justice, equality and power are. In other words, we cannot possibly have access to any unmediated narratives of suffering, victimhood and experience.

This is not an insight that would have escaped Das, given her close and complicated engagement with both Pain and Memory It is all the more significant, therefore, that the two most significant events of the last four years – the anti-Mandal agitation and the demolition of the Babri Masjid – both of which produced discourses of pain and memory that cannot be easily slotted in terms of 'victimhood', should be omitted from the critical events Das has chosen to discuss Does this omission point to the limits of the anthropological perspective just as Bhopal and Partition point to the limits of the political?

Nivedita Menon

PATRONS AND PHILISTINES: Arts and the State in British India by Pushpa Sundar. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995

THIS timely publication appears when we are in the midst of a national exercise concerned with the development and administration of the arts. Sundar's book deals with British art policies during their presence and rule in India and covers the areas of conservation, museums and the visual and performing arts in addition to architecture and archaeology. She advances a humbling arrangement of facts, and despite some surprises (where she equates post-Renaissance western art exclusively with scientific and earthly concerns in order to contrast it with the Indian, stated to be exclusively spiritual), she has been commendably objective and fair to a subject which is prickly to say the least.

The author takes an intriguing stand in the Introduction: 'What is being attempted is not "art history" as understood today, but a history of policy. The emphasis therefore is on the socio-economic organization of artistic activity and the action of the state, rather than on issues of dating, style, influences, or interpretations, except when these have policy implications.'

Her desire to concentrate on a certain aspect of art policy is entirely licit; all the same it is difficult to divorce policy from its effects or, in other words, to separate the patron from the results of his patronage, and still write a history of it. Against this background, the interpretation of art history as 'dating, styles (and) influences' is mildly defensive. Contextual historiography in art studies is not a recent phenomenon but does, today in particular, follow the same course as other histories by taking a sharp extra-curricular look at the subject. Secondly, the history of art, whether Mauryan, Chola, Gupta, Mughal or 'British' India, has to a major extent been the history of patronage and a separation of the two is impossible It is reassuring to note therefore that in certain passages Sundar has herself tacitly acknowledged this by weaving comment into the data, and rescued her own manuscript from the same specialization that she assigns, quite in passing, to 'art history'. It is these insights that add dimension to her work, and one only wishes there were more.

The thesis itself is a graph of decline which records the gradual disenfranchisement of the traditional Indian artist as a result of British art policy which caused a formal bifurcation between the so-called 'fine' arts and the crafts, as taught specifically in the British-run art schools of the mid-19th century. Sundar shows this important factor as coincidental with the deliberate difference brought about between the 'elite' or English-speaking student- professional – (as English replaced the earlier Persian and Sanskrit) and the user-occupant of the regional language and cultural idiom

In other words, the creation of two cultures within a single state/unit was a partial result of Macaulay's infamous Minute which endorsed the creation of the 'white Indian/ brown saheb'. We may see this as the beginning of a methodological divide between the European as the modern and the Eastern as the traditional, the latter patronized, the former tacitly approved. Sundar speaks with conviction and factual support on this subject in the chapter, 'Renaissance and Regulation'

Social tensions were inbuilt in this false ranging of opposites, and Sundar is quick to point out the changing position of the British with respect to these developments. Taking care to mention the watershed year of 1857, she points out that not twenty years later, early rumblings relating to nation-consciousness and liberal government on the part of Indians – partly as a direct result of widespread education on the British pattern – also saw the changing policy of the British from 'assimilation' on Macaulian lines to 'indigenization' towards their Indian subjects.

The central problem relating to policies on cultural identity is addressed by Sundar in the important chapter, 'Art and Swadeshi' which records the rise of the 'indigenous' styles in reaction to the pressures of advancing European

models. This is most visible in the visual arts of painting and sculpture while the performing arts are dealt with in separate chapters. Sundar holds the lack of interest and knowledge on the part of the British as the chief reason for music and dance to have flourished for the most part on traditional lines, while music was least 'affected' Literature and drama, on the other hand, rose with a shout of protest, and Sundar's chapter 'Of Sedition and Stratagem', which records the vernacular rising of popular sentiment on the subjects of agricultural and political reform, culture and identity, is a fine read. The language theatre and social milieu of Bengal and Maharashtra are discussed with lively involvement.

This – accidentally, if you like – brings the arc-lights on the direction that painting and sculpture took as a result of a clear tug-of-war between art policies in this area. It is also a revealing example of the methodological direction that assessments of the Indian visual arts – specially those concerning policy – have taken. Students and scholars have often pointed out the catalytic phases of self-destructive confusion that the visual arts have undergone in contrast to the other arts, and it is worthwhile to take a look at this important section in the book.

E.B. Havell and Abanindranath Tagore were the initiators of the indigenous style typified in the 'Bengal School' which countered the western academic realism of the official art schools. One of these, the Bombay School of Art was a major stronghold whose principal, Gladstone Solomon (1919-1931), was its foremost spokesman, albeit one of many. Havell 'patronized' Indian art and revolted against 'British philistinism' in doing so. Sundar shears close to the skin when she quotes Partha Mitter and Tapati Guha-Thakurta in pointing out that Havell, the apparent promoter of Indian-ness, was actually an Empire-lover at heart with no sympathy for the nationalists, while further agreeing with the authors whom she quotes in saying that despite this drawback Havell 're-positioned' Indian art in a positive way.

This established, Sundar proceeds to record the *avant-garde* movements of the '40s which included the Young Turks Group led by P.T. Reddy and later the Progressive Artists' Group which included Souza and Husain. Both groups dumped the Academic as well as what Sundar calls the 'Orientalist' school to 'take Indian art confidently forward into the post-Independence era'.

This view is revealing as it tacitly endorses the European examples – shown as synonymous with the 'modern' – followed by the groups mentioned, accompanied all along with the fall of the artisan whose position is shown more and more as an appendage to the arts As Sundar has shown, in the performing arts the traditional artist holds centre-stage precisely because his art has held out against lack of European understanding in contrast to the traditional artist in the visual arts who is cast into the slow oblivion of a technician or pattern-maker. However, she could have enriched her account with a separate discussion on the reasons for this opposite development and those for the element of protest and reform as a subject in the case of theatre and literature.

This would admittedly lead her into the realm of social psychology and the basics of aesthetic structure, but this would only be necessary, after all, in a history of art policy in which the traditional artist is the chief protagonist and the one most affected by these policies Sundar has made related comments separately in each chapter, but this is insufficient. May I add, however, that her chapters, 'Not so Fine Art Policy', 'Art and Swadeshi' and 'In Retrospect' do contain material of value and insight on the subject.

Apart from this, one or two factors ask for debate and although space is always a casualty in a review, the one important enough to be mentioned concerns her observation in 'Setting the Stage' where she states, correctly, that earlier Indian art did not maintain a division between 'fine arts' and the 'decorative arts'. The reason she offers for this is the stated 'anonymity' of both craftsman and artist This is difficult terrain Although chronicling has been erratic and many records – for hundreds of decades – missing and destroyed, the anonymity factor has been exposed as the great red herring of Indian art historical studies. Professors Moti Chandra, Nihar Ranjan Ray, Karl Khandalavala, B.N Goswamy and Romila Thapar – to mention a few – have offered proof which ranges from inscriptions to records and names of artists kept from the pre-Christian era onwards, although one is perfectly aware of their paucity when measured against the great corpus of Indian art.

Professor Nihar Ranjan Ray had very early pointed out the caste and, more significantly, occupational, distinctions maintained between the literate person/artist knowledgeable in *shastric* disciplines of the arts, and the craftsman who carried out the actual carving of an inscription or design We may see this as proof of the preservation of social identity, if not actually nomenclature, within a group even if not always strict and even if records of names are not common Moreover, the social phenomenon of the vocational, as opposed to the professional, attitude to production removed the necessity for the specialized categories of 'art' and 'craft', in an atmosphere where some mobility has always remained possible.

Therefore, against this background, Sundar's observation of parity between the 'fine' artist and craftsman is correct, but her argument which advances anonymity as the reason for this parity deserves reassessment. Very likely the reason is of the simplest – the acknowledgment of the cardinal necessity of the artist to the survival needs of society whether literate or not. Parity between art and craft would assuredly exist when a man bows before a ritually cast and consecrated religious icon with the same devotion with which he touches his tools to his forehead before he begins to harvest or build.

Pushpa Sundar has handled an important and difficult subject with a noticeable attempt at objectivity. She has

been fair to Curzon, our favourite bugbear, and has quoted in full a statement by him (147) which sounds embarrassingly prophetic today, specially when he forecasts that by the time the Indian patron awakens to the beauties of his own art, it may be too late.

The author has also stood her ground in questioning the efficacy of the Akademis and government departments dealing with the arts in independent India, and has highlighted the importance of educating the patron as a possible first step to educating anyone else In some areas where her findings require it, her concluding paragraphs offer open-ended remarks which make further discourse possible, and which may sharpen scrutiny to make connoisseurship possible.

Mala Marwah

IMAGE AND IMAGINATION: Five Contemporary Artists in India by Geeti Sen. Mapin Publishing, Ahmedabad, 1996.

THIS is a brilliant, lucid book which attempts to capture the essence of interior states as expressed through art Art forms are treated as if they were narratives, unique and personal yet interweaving with the cultural contexts in which these artists find themselves. Through interview and careful analysis, Geeti Sen tries to discover the lambent weave between the artist's self and the work.

The style of the artist is seen to be a personal motif that emerges again and again through canvas or metal. The text is simple, almost distilled so that the world of the artist and his or her work are brought glimmeringly close Language is used in such a way that the craft of the painter becomes internalised and rewoven in a new and lovely texture which calls the reader to go look at the paintings

Yet I find it odd, when each of these artists (Meera Mukherjee, Jogen Chowdhury, Manjit Bawa, Arpita Singh and Ganesh Pyne) are manifestly involved in the world in which they live, seers and dreamers who read the past and imagine the future, Sen should read these canvasses in terms of 'their inclination to eschew the immediate world of realities' (12)

'Or let us say that, as against the cultural hegemony of other artists who respond to the volatile situation of violence and aggression, their work is not politically motivated or treated as commentary....'

Here, in the very statement of the problem she creates a dualism between the event and the idea.

'Their concern is less with the ideological statement being made but rather with the treatment of the image which reflect, in essence, their world-view. A particular work may be occasioned by an event which happened not last week or last year, but possibly more than 2000 years ago as in the image of *Ashoka at Kalinga* by Meera Mukherjee On the other hand, the image may be inspired by the idea of terror which was all-pervasive in the years of the Emergency in India; encapsulated in one single image of *Tiger in Moonlight Night* by Jogen Chowdhury. *Yet it is the idea rather than the event which is evoked within us* (italics original).

I have grave problems with this interpretation. Every painting and sculpture produced in this book has something deeply political, deeply significant about it. Perhaps it is because for me, politics is personal – it is not merely what government and politicians constitute – it is every arena, every choice that we make. The mediative calm power of Ashoka's face (*Ashoka at Kalinga 1980*) carries a statement as powerful as myth, as sacred as a miracle It tells us what politics should be.

The strange and haunting grace of Sen's narrative makes this book rise above its possibly proclaimed coffee table nature. One can return to it again and again because the paper is good, the stories of the artists and their dreams are entrenched in our minds as values worth having, the reproductions of paintings and metal is opalescent and everything is on the grand scale that the volatile Sen epitomises. Here, in the narrative, she becomes a shadow voice, telling a story of not just painting or sculpture – but I think nationalism.

In her narrative for some odd, inexplicable reason nationalism is delinked from politics

'For the most part this book spans a period of productivity of 25 years· from the end of the '60s to the mid '80s – a time of social ferment in India, of fundamental changes in value systems, a time when emerging conflicts between class and caste and community have led us to question that which we took for granted with the constitution of a new India, the very basic concepts of social and religious tolerance, of opportunities for all classes with an Indian identity.' (11)

Exactly at this point, when she makes such a clear statement about what constitutes the vantage point these artists have: the confrontation of tradition and modernity, the linking of folk art and contemporary interpretation she says 'What are we to make of this art which seems to hold meaning for us through its infinite resources, and which yet has little relevance to reality' (13)

To me, on the other hand, the rich figured texts of the paintings express what C. Wright Mills longed as a methodological imprint for the sociologist's imagination: the weave of culture, history and biography. Each of these artists have been able to define this for themselves in varied and brilliant ways. It would be unfair to Sen's reading of the works – consummate and elegant as it is – to superimpose another reading Yet, I must make some brief comments on the political implications of creative free imaginations, the things they say to us, and of course of the greatness of the lives she has portrayed in this book: people who live not only by their imagination, but by their concentration and labour, and their ultimate belief in freedom.

Sen does make the last point very forcefully with regard to Meera Mukherjee. In the most delicate of portraits she outlines the life of the sculptor Meera Mukherjee.

'The labour apart, the amount of metal to be poured into the furnaces for an 11 foot figure had used up all her resources. Two and a half years of labour and of bronze metal later, the Ashoka stood unseen and unwanted, in the small courtyard leading into the red brick house where Meera Mukherjee has lived since 1903. There was no income ....'.

What Sen shows in the essay about Meera, is that which Simone Weil worked so hard to express in her notebooks and diaries: the need to break down the distinction, the hierarchies between manual and mental labour. Simone Weil had fascinating sections on geometry and imagination, on dance and symmetry. In the poignancy and asceticism, the poverty and the genius, Meera lives out a similar vocation. Ideological is political: truth and beauty are as much political goals as is nationalism. These artists express freedom of the individual and the collective in the most vibrant way. So also, as one looks at the filigree quality of Meera's work, chased as carefully and as freely as a dream, one realises her debt to the tribal craftsmen of Bastar.

Here too, a political point is made. Is Art Art, or is it 'Tribal' 'Indian' 'Modern' or whatever? When one says 'Tribal' art, or 'Aboriginal' art of 'Native American' art, it sounds condescending. Meera shows the delicacy of these forms of metallurgy, the nuances of tribal myth. 'The sculptor transforms the daily routine of existence into a heroic act, the drudgery of survival into a moment of glory' (34). It is this mystical imagination, this interior landscape that all the painters contribute to: vivid moments of looking at the world around, swallowing this cosmos whole into their bodies, as only Gods and heroes can, and then laughing as they all do at what appears on canvas or metal. It is personal, erotic, magical – and each person who sees these works will follow the journey in his or her own way, sometimes comparable with the artists or art-historian's vision, sometimes completely at variance. Surely that is what a map is for – to look at, to wonder, and sometimes to follow? Each of the lives and works represented are so creative and complex it would be unfair to carve and dissect them in a review. The book handles this delicately and sharply, like bamboos drawn in black ink

Susan Visvanathan

UPHOLDING THE COMMON LIFE: The Community of Mirabai. by Parita Mukta. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994.

THIS is an excellent book – among the best I have read in a long time. Based on field work in Rajasthan and Saurashtra on the singing of Mira *bhajans* among dalit communities, it offers a perspective on the extent of Mira's radicalism and shows us how much farther it goes than the renunciation and ecstasy we take for granted. We are made to see with startling clarity the social implication of Mira's choice, a choice that makes her name, to this day, a term of abuse among the Rajputs of whom she was one.

It is the virtue of this study that Mira's love for Krishna is placed in a context of a strong breakaway. Mira rejects clan (the princely Rajputs); caste (she takes a *chamar*, Rohidas as her guru); and patriarchy (she fights the imposed arranged marriage while her husband the Rana lives, and the prescript for widowhood when he dies). Thus the movement out of the palace and on to the road strikes a blow at the three framers that hold Hindu society in place. The 'untouchable' castes with whom she threw in her lot make Mira their own, as indeed she was. The community of Mira is, therefore, a social, political, moral community. She is by this reading, a 'dangerously' subversive force piercing through the inequalities of the edifice with a stunning courage and total conviction.

The disruption caused by this Rajput princess and her opposition to feudal forces, speaks directly to oppressed groups. Her choice of poverty (*adha tukda* and *khatti chaas*, broken bread and sour buttermilk) and her ostracized status makes her one of them. They express solidarity with her as she did with them then, and express their suffering through her songs.

How is the disruption she causes to be borne? In her time it was met by the Sisodiyas of Mewar either with a stony silence or murderous anger. She was a *kul-nasi*, destroyer of the clan and its honour; no Rajput daughter, Mukta tells us, has been named Mira since Mira shook the dust of Mewar from her feet. In other regions she had been tamed and re-appropriated by a sentimentalizing middle class and a commercializing media. Goverdhanram Tripathi, the 19th century Gujarati novelist speaking of later additions, refers to 'many a clever little woman (who), has composed her own sweet songs in the name of Mira' (Mukta, p. 33). Kanu Desai, the painter, pictures her as a romantic dreamer on the seashore, hair streaming in the wind. Hema Malini in the commercial film on Mira's life, highlights her skills as a dancer. Plaster-of-Paris statues of Mira sold on the roadside represent her as a chaste and quiet widow bent over her *ektara* as if in prayer Even M.S. Subbulakshmi's divine rendering of the bhajans, says Mukta, sever her from the crucial alternative social links she formed and set her floating in a purely aesthetic and spiritual realm.

This brings us to Gandhi and Mira, for it was Gandhi, of course, who loved Subbulakshmi's rendering of *Hari Tum Haro*. In an extremely interesting chapter, Mukta analyses Gandhi's use of Mira, showing it to be both complete and partial. Gandhi took from her life and songs only those aspects which suited his nationalist programme of non-cooperation with a tyrannical, imperial power. But he glossed over her refutation of caste and marriage (with its concomitant prescriptions for widowhood), for his radicalism could not countenance the breakdown of these. The family, for Gandhi, was the keystone as well as paradigm of an ideal society in which unselfishness, self-control and

high noble purpose would keep authority/obedient relations going harmoniously. Though he opposed the notion of untouchability, he supported the *varnashrama vyavastha* Mukta makes us see the chasm between Gandhi's non-cooperation with the colonial power and Mira's challenge to an iniquitous social system. When Mira, in one of her bhajans, explicitly refuses to be the socially sanctioned widow and insists on wearing red bangles (she who otherwise refuses all adornments), she poses a challenge to the family. Gandhi and Kalelkar between them expunged those lines and substituted something less threatening

In sum, the real Mira is one who fights *and* sings. She is the Mira of the poor, the people's Mira. One is reminded of Christ whose radical choices were also translated by bourgeois powers and high culture into a purely spiritual realm so that the temporal order could remain intact

Parita Mukta's commentary on the bhajans is sensitive to nuance, and the boundaries between anthropology and literary criticism disappear quite marvellously Her entry into the life of the dalit communities and into the world of the bhajans suggest an imagination and an extension of a self truly remarkable. At the same time, here is no poetic dreamer; her analysis is incisive and hard-hitting.

Some repetition occurs from time to time, since the same well known life is referred to repeatedly. But this is to carp. Parita Mukta writes with clarity and fluidity, her values implicit in every sentence of her beautiful style, giving the reader entry into the community of Mira so that we experience their pain as they sing Mira. Whether performance of oral forms serves as a means of banking down protest is another issue, one that is not raised here The emphasis is on solidarity and on the memory of Mira's political actions as inspiration. One puts the book down with a sense of being awakened and called.

Suguna Ramanathan

THE VEILED WOMEN: Shifting Gender Equations in Rural Haryana 1880-1990 by Prem Chowdhary. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1994

GENDER equations across the world have remained much the same even though appearing to change. This is because the structures of patriarchy have always fitted the roles of women into society to their disadvantage. Women, victimised both because they are not empowered and because they are, seem fated to be losers

This book examines the shifting gender equations in rural Haryana from 1880-1990 in this light. In fact 'Ideological and cultural norms have turned women into implicit accomplices to their inequality by making them accept their marginal allocations and even justify it' (232). Thus, whether it is dowry or bride price, women's active involvement in the peasant economy or lack of it, her right to widow remarriage mostly prevalent in its levirate form alone – all these were used to serve the interests of patriarchy and the state And both the colonial and the Indian state have only helped in maintaining this state of affairs.

In Chapter I, the author situates cultural practices, women's role in the economy, requirements and response of the colonial state and how they crystallised around the demands of patriarchy. The next chapter examines the position of women in the new political economy of independent India Throwing light on the state's direct intervention in providing a capitalist thrust to the economy in the form of a green or white revolution, Chowdhary shows how despite a high economic participation in agriculture, there continues to be a cultural devaluation of the work women put in. The old cultural constraints have been kept alive ensuring their non-participation in decision-making

In Chapter III, the author attempts to establish the linkages between state interventions in the form of legislation and societal response shaped by the dominant culture and ideology She successfully brings out the constraints women encounter in accessing the benefits given to them through law.

While the 'economic value' of women has been acknowledged in popular Harayanvi culture, they have always lacked economic worth. This can be seen in the wide prevalence of infanticide at some period of time. The author uses the example of numerous local proverbs which reflect the dominant social ethos by showing a marked preference for boys over girls The enormous difference in the male-female ratio recorded in the colonial period still exists.

Using the generally accepted indices of high status such as bride price, widow remarriage and polyandry or its own sexual variants, the author has shown how while allowing, or more relevantly ensuring, their full economic participation in agriculture and their contribution to the economy, women actually lacked either high social status or substantial economic standing In fact, social practices were moulded, replaced or replenished to serve the interests of patriarchy and the state. While the important role played by women in the economy led to the wide acceptance of the custom of sale and purchase of brides, dowry has always been used to subordinate women.

Widow remarriage was prevalent primarily in its levirate or Karewa form, where the widow was remarried to one of the younger brothers of the deceased husband. The popularity of Karewa emanated not out of a need to raise the status of women by giving them the option of remarriage, but from the need to retain landed property within the family. Thus the control of the deceased's land from the widow, who succeeded to a life estate in the male lineal descendants, was passed to the brother of the deceased or to a patriarchal family member because a widow lost all her rights to property on remarriage. The widow's right to remarry was severely restricted and could be settled only by the late husband's family. There have been instances

when widows have been married to boys much younger than them. However, her being older than her husband only meant the increased power of her in-laws who intervened on behalf of the young 'husband'. In fact, this agrarian milieu which necessitated the remarriage of widows, gradually degenerated to sexual exploitation of women by all male members of the family to the extent that fathers-in-law began claiming Karewa rights to their daughters-in-law.

The colonial state in its interpretations served to reinforce these customary practices. 'It is not surprising therefore that in the high labour intensive economy the customary law of the land, backed by the full force of the colonial administrators, not only safeguarded the landed property from women's possession, but also asserted their control over her labour and reproduction of that labour', Chowdhary points out.

The author then goes on to show how even with the coming of the green revolution and the introduction of capital-intensive farming, a woman's workload was not reduced. It was merely re-cast in keeping with the new agricultural system However, it also resulted in district-region specific proletarianisation of certain sections of rural women and a noticeable marginalisation of female agricultural wage labourers both in terms of work and earnings, leading to a cultural devaluation of her economic contribution. While men emerge as the holders and controllers of power, women have hardly any socio-cultural recognition of entitlement rights to a share of resources. In fact they are severely deprived and discriminated against in every way, ranging from food intake to medical facilities and education. There appears to have been an increase in the restrictions imposed on women in the post-colonial period which the author links to the changes in the agrarian economy and the structural changes made by the state in introducing direct, positive, administrative and judicial interventionist measures to ensure equality.

While documenting what appears to be the complicity of some women with the patriarchal order, she also documents their attempts to find their own inroads into these structures of patriarchy which are subversive without always openly confronting the hierarchies of power and authority But there seem to be no instances of active resistance and while Chowdhary notes the absence of any protest movement or active women's movement, she does not dwell upon why this has not taken place

What makes Chowdhary's book stand out among others in this area of study is the use of oral evidence in the form of folklore, sayings, and songs As she herself says, ' .. oral sources are being used here to determine people's perception of reality and social life as it has been personally experienced and continues to be experienced ' She stresses that women's personal normatives and a distinct 'feminine voice' are not enough to do justice to their histories. She has therefore relied equally upon oral evidence from men who were, as she writes, voicing feminine concerns and projecting an alternative to dominant male cultural attitudes

In terms of both the tools used and the analysis of the gender equations over a period of a century, this book is a significant contribution to the field of gender studies.

Enakshi Ganguly Thukral

SOUTH ASIAN CULTURAL STUDIES: A Bibliography by Vinay Lal. Manohar, Delhi, 1996.

SINCE the pioneering work done in the late '70s at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham by Stuart Hall, Raymond Williams and E.P Thompson, this has become an area of intense academic activity. Today there is virtually no field of human endeavour that has not been decoded and brought under its rubric

For students and scholars engaged in cultural studies of South Asia, Vinay Lal has put together this well-researched bibliography, prefaced with an essay introducing the subject. As cultural studies now also include gender studies, ecology and historiography as well as science, medicine and ethnicity – Lal has provided thematically organized bibliographies under these and other headings.

This is a valuable addition to one's own reading list and a necessary investment for institutions and public libraries.

Seminarist

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION: A Buddhist Perspective by Arvind Sharma. New Delhi Oxford University Press, 1995.

WHILE there is no dearth of books on the philosophy of religion or of Buddhism, a study of religion from the Buddhist perspective is a welcome original enterprise. The author is an eminent scholar specialising in the comparative study of religions and conversant with contemporary western thought as well as traditional Indian classics. The present work thus is of general interest and promise not only on account of its theme and approach but also because of the exceptional competence of its author.

Sharma rightly points out that the enterprise to define religion as also Buddhism is beset with difficulties from the outset. The author quotes an opinion now common to the effect that different religions do not share any common essence but have only what Wittgenstein called a 'family resemblance'. Such an approach, which replaces essence by 'family resemblance' enables one to treat Buddhism as a religion with a marked soteriological content. The author takes up his problematic from contemporary philosophers of religion such as John H Hick and seeks the answers in Buddhism. In interpreting Buddhism, he places much reliance on Jayatilleke. He begins with the concept of God

and finds there is no place for a 'monotheistic' or personal God in Buddhism. He proceeds to examine in the light of Buddhist thought the grounds for belief in God as formulated by Aquinas and others; and goes on to examine the grounds of disbelief formulated by modern sociology, psychoanalysis and science

Further chapters examine the problems of evil, revelation and faith, religious language and verification Others deal with the conflicting truth claims of different religions and the question of human destiny. These chapters contain much insightful and scintilating 'cross-religious' discussion. Such philosophical discussion, however, assumes the normal form of religion to be the one evolved in the Semitic tradition, namely as a creed based on revelation and leading to the worship of God and the obedience of law as prescribed in the authentic tradition of the community so that the worshipper may be saved from sin and qualify for everlasting felicity in the life after death. The modern philosopher tends to question most of the beliefs implicit in such a concept of religion. Indeed none of these beliefs – God, revelation, salvation – can be rationally sustained or empirically verified.

A rational philosophy of religion, then, can only have the purpose of persuading its students to explore religious ideas and claims so that they could reject them with conviction. On the other hand, one could question such a philosophy not only because it discusses problems in the main as they arise from the theology of a particular kind but also because its logic is adequate only for scientific enquiries into purely empirical or purely logical objects. What would seem to be necessary is to discover a methodology adequate for the philosophical consideration of religious experience, as modern Indian savants from Ram Mohan Roy to Radhakrishnan have attempted

It should be interesting to recall here that Buddhist philosophy itself rejects the notion of real essences and seeks to replace it with that of continuous, infinitesimal differences which characterise any series of existent particulars underlying the phenomenal appearance of stable individuals and common generic classes. The Buddhist theory of *apoha* also clarifies that the meanings of words are nothing but images and constructs These images and constructs may, however, be superimposed on empirical data in a pragmatically valid manner to yield the objects of common social discourse.

The meaning of 'religion', thus, would be a matter of usage and religion would be a part of *samvrti*. If samvrti were the whole truth as it is for modern empiricists, the difficulty would be that the philosopher of religion would either find his object of enquiry in terms of some particular theology or as an observable socio-cultural phenomenon In the former case, one would be either accepting a theology of some kind or rejecting the very concept of religion as a cognitively valid and distinctive mode of experience. In the latter case, the philosophy of religion would turn into a historical anthropology. As a result, contemporary philosophies of religion tend to be either veiled forms of some Christian theology or its rejection based on some kind of empiricism Buddhism distinguishes between the two levels of truth – *samvrti* and *paramartha*. As a pragmatically valid concept, *Dharma* leads from the former to the latter The validity of diverse faiths at the empirical level is only relative (*Vinaybhedatdesanabhedah*). Absolute truth is attained only in *Bodhi*.

Sharma's present work is a serious attempt to present the philosophy of religion from a Buddhist perspective. It is based on a sound knowledge of the varied literature on the subject and is at the same time, full of the sparkle of stimulating philosophical reflection in a cross-cultural context. It should be of immense use and interest to the students and scholars of the philosophy of religion

G.C. Pande

HINDUISM FOR OUR TIMES by Arvind Sharma. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.

THIS book is an attempt at placing Hinduism as a religion and way of life in a contemporary context and begins by questioning whether Hinduism has changed with the times or, in the author's words, 'how does Hinduism handle change?' (5).

He places a unique perspective of this at the very onset: that the 'world (may be) moulded in the shape of Hinduism (rather) than that Hindus (be) moulded in the shape of the world' (2). This is a crucial statement for though the book intends to be an interpretation of Hindu philosophy it begins increasingly to sound like a manual of faith about the way one might interpret highly contested concepts of Hinduism. Moreover, while elucidating concepts he considers significant (*karma*, rebirth, the *varna* order, tolerance) Sharma seems to speak with an almost uncritical (if not unconditional) acceptance of these concepts. Thus, there is an attempt to prove that all one needs, to come to terms with these amidst the 'everday', is a new look, a new perception and way of seeing Readers may not thus find sociological insights, or even historical analyses here as there is no statement of purpose or preface offered by the author.

Primarily the book aims to understand the practical viability of these 'universal' Hindu tenets or the possibility of a 'paradigm-shift' (15). But no attempt is made to seek contradictions in terms of the dialectics of religion difference between the scriptures and practice, the way religion is 'conducted', so to say, at varied levels – local, indigenous and contextualised. The book is divided into five chapters, each on a particular aspect of Hinduism. The first considers whether Hinduism has changed with the times along with a discussion on what constitutes the 'Hindu' world-view. Thus, while Vivekananda in the 19th century argued vociferously for the Vedanta school of Hindu philosophy (sometimes completely indentifying the two) as being the

solution to problems of the poor nations, Sharma avers that it is wrong to identify Vedanta with Hinduism, or Hindu spirituality with Indian spirituality (2).

Having stated this, the reader is left searching in vain for Sharma's understanding of what constitutes Hinduism; and what 'Hinduism' means. Does Hinduism consist only of the concepts of Karma, tolerance, rebirth and so on? In this context, can one speak of 'practical religion' (although social anthropology is not the aim of this book)? Even in terms of what Hinduism means to people at large and its various manifestations, a discussion would have been helpful. How much importance, for instance, do the myriad traditions (identified as Hindu/religious) give to the concept of varna, karma and rebirth? Should there not have been discussion on the constant contestations at various levels, in rituals and folklore and myths, with what goes down as the universal? In fact, any discussion on the contemporaneity of a religion cannot ignore, or negate, the distinction between what is universally applicable and what is not. If Sharma had dwelled upon what he terms as 'Indian spirituality' of which he says Hindu spirituality is a part (2), these distinctions would have been clear. To accept what is called 'universal' without contesting it, seems a major weakness of the book. While placing Hinduism in the contemporary context, one feels that placing it in the context of the developments of materialistic interpretations (*Carvaka*; *Lokayata*) as a critique of the Vedic worldview should have been enlightening as it is one way of putting in perspective the 'universal' or the 'universalised'.

So far as the Gita as a sacred treatise is concerned, does it indeed have the same meaning for all communities (even if they are broadly categorised as Hindu)? Does the *ras-lila* of Krsna – the earthy god – have more significance for some communities and some rituals than his awesome image in the didactic Gita? One may not give legitimacy to these developments in religion, but a discussion on them – specially when one claims to be talking for a *living* religion, or a 'way of life' – should have found a place in this book

As regards the 'paradigm shift', one can trace an apotheosis of Gandhi, in that Sharma transposes the myth of Yudhisthira and the Yaksa in the Mahabharata to include in the contemporary context a certain 'Gandhian paradigm' of Hinduism (18) To the various questions of the Yaksa, Yudhisthira replies that since scriptures, *smrtis*, *srutis* and even sages differ on the basic questions of life, the 'right' path is the one adopted by the *mahajana* (or 'great person'): Sharma believes that 'Gandhi's arrival on the Indian scene (is) something like the return of Yudhisthira.. ' (12). It is this juxtaposition of two figures, far removed in time, history, political and cultural contexts, which is the problem. The author's perception of paradigm shift, then, seems to be too narrow, naive and simplistic. For surely it does not entail a mere shifting of identities in an absolutely decontextualised situation. Yet, on the other hand, this paradigm shift involves the conferring of a new status to Gandhi – as the harbinger of a new kind of Hinduism

This forces one to wonder how Sharma wishes to construct Gandhi's image: as a religious figure, a saint (a Yudhisthira re-born) seemingly larger than his identity within the anti-colonial struggle. Is there a 'Gandhian' paradigm to Hinduism? The author seems almost to build a case for identifying Gandhi's adoption of certain traditional practices and symbols with a religious movement If this is not the case, then it is possible that Sharma's uncritical and casual usage of 'paradigm shift' vis-a-vis Gandhi could be misunderstood. One must steer clear of absolutising ideals in a vacuum. However interesting as an interpretation, it is difficult to see how Gandhi can be removed from his immediate context or ignore the appropriating of symbols, historical places, figures and persons towards a universal, monolithic, pan-Indian construct of 'Hindutva', and one kind of Hinduism.

In his chapter on Karma and Rebirth Today, the author accepts at the basic level the causality which inheres in the doctrine of Karma and rebirth. Causation/causality has not been problematised or re-evaluated. Sharma only wishes to convey how it is possible to live with a modern-day interpretation of re-birth: as being a 'compress(ion) of several lives into one life' (34).

Sharma devotes a great deal of attention to the idea of tolerance as the mainstay of Hinduism. Unfortunately he offers no new insights save that 'democracy is Hinduism in a political idiom', and that 'totalitarian or authoritarian regimes are the...political counterparts to the proselytising religions like Islam and Christianity' (69). Sharma thus reveals his inability to seek the socio-political, cultural contexts of religious movements or mark a distinction between orthodoxy and dissent in the form of heretic sects. Anyone who says: '.. in order to save democracy, totalitarian regimes must be kept under pressure to democratise, as seems to be the case in the current state of relationship betwen the USA and USSR' or 'in order to save itself, Hinduism must save others... missionise other religions in the directions of tolerance' is hardly in a position to discourse tolerance credibly.

The author speaks of the 'intolerance of intolerance' (74). But it may have helped if he had spelt out clearly intolerance of what, apart from the intolerance of what to him seem intolerant religions. What about inequalities on the basis of caste/gender? But Sharma is not interested in structural changes and supports the idea of a status quo as the book shows easier ways of coming to terms with contradictions, dilemmas and paradoxes. However, the critique that comes as end notes may have been useful as part of the main text. The book leaves one wondering if Sharma is a philosopher trying to come to terms with his own religion and his own favourite personalities.

R. Umamaheshwari

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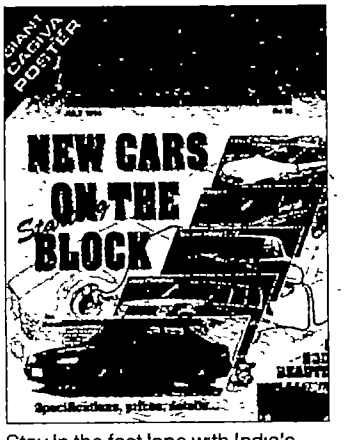

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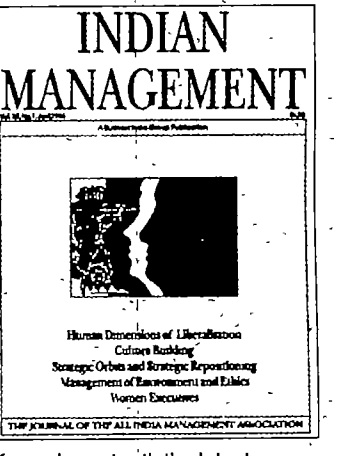

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Comment:

Thinking beyond gender in India

THE words 'man' and 'woman' are universally translatable into most known languages. Although there are important differences in the ways the man-woman relationship is structured in different societies, these differences are less important than the basic similarity of the relationship, premised upon a normative heterosexuality, geared towards reproduction of a dominant group (men) and a subordinate group (women).

Witness the case of Nicole Simpson whose history of enduring violence at the hands of her husband, concealing its extent from the public gaze, suffering pressure from her family to try and save the marriage, is so startlingly similar to the numerous cases of wife-beating that often culminate in wife-murder in India.[1] That more Indian than American women may end up dead in such situations has a lot to do with the greater affluence of American society which makes it possible for women to find a job and a place to stay and leave before they are killed.

Focusing on issues like sati and the so-called dowry deaths in Indian society or, conversely, on the high rate of abandonment of women and children by men in western societies, tends to foster a syndrome of what might be called 'Our patriarchy is better than yours'.[2] This syndrome functions both at the collective and at the individual level, and within women's movements as much as in society at large, if more insidiously in the former than the latter.

The direction of activist, media or governmental energies, which are directed only (or mainly) towards prevention or redress of atrocities, functions both as a threat and a reassurance for most women. The average woman is subliminally persuaded that she has nothing to complain of if her husband does not batter her. The atrocity, constructed as such by media, legal terminology and protestors, functions to legitimize rather than to undermine the structures of male-female relationships. For every one reported police rape taken up by women's groups in India, there are hundreds of unreported routine marital rapes, for every one case of severe wife beating there are hundreds of cases of more routinized, less severe violence in marriage as well as hundreds of routinely unhappy, tedious marriages.

In the late '70s, one of the main theoretical differences between party affiliated women's organizations and autonomous women's groups was supposed to be that the former emphasized class over gender and the latter gender over class. Twenty years later, the differences seemed far less important because in actual practice all of us were doing the same work – what could be called firefighting and band-aid application. We were constantly responding in various ways to two kinds of requests: first, to change a violent marriage into a routinely unhappy one; second, and less often, to change an unhappy marriage into a happy one; third, to take revenge for a marriage that had ended in frustrating, injuring or killing a woman.

Although different organizations had started out with different agendas and political positions and although these differences remained in theory, women activists in general, if to different degrees, ended up functioning as marriage counsellors, retrievers of dowries and legal aid providers. Families frequently demanded of the organization in which I worked that we function like a macabre wedding band and demonstrate and protest the demise of a marriage. What is more, we were criticized for resisting such pressure.

Overall, unless themselves the targets of protest, most families and most men who came in contact with our women's organization, as also most government agencies and officers including the police, applauded our work and thought we were doing very useful social work, as indeed we were. We were keeping heterosexual structures in repair by functioning as unpaid relief workers, even though this wasn't quite what we had set out to do. In a society where women suffer so much pain, such relief work needs to be done – and perhaps everyone should contribute a certain number of years of their life to doing it – like a sort of tithe or tax.[3]

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* A version of this paper was first presented at a conference on Indian women organized by the South Asia programme at Cornell University, 1 April 1995. Another version was presented at the South Asian programme, Syracuse University. The paper presents some of my reflections on women's situation and women's movements in India, based on 13 years of working as founding co-editor of *Manushi* - a journal about women and society, for which I wrote a regular legal column, and as a feminist activist involved in many campaigns relating to violence against women. I left *Manushi* in 1990, and not all the views expressed in this paper represent those of *Manushi*.

1 The similarity, in the U.S. and in India, of media and public reaction to atrocities, especially those perpetrated by celebrities, is evident in the recent Naina Sahni case. Her husband, Sushil Sharma, a Congress politician, is alleged to have murdered her and burnt her body in the kitchen of a restaurant. Sharma's public profile and the gruesome way the body was disposed of, has led to the case being in newspaper headlines every day, and to several protest demonstrations by women's organizations.

2 I refer to the deaths as 'so-called dowry deaths' because *Manushi*'s experience of dealing with these cases over the years showed that several other factors, primarily that of the powerlessness of a wife whose natal family abandon her to the mercies of her marital family, contribute more to the escalating violence that leads to wife-murder than does dowry in itself. The deaths are frequently projected as caused by dowry because the law makes it easier to prosecute cases so classified. See Madhu Kishwar, 'Rethinking dowry boycott', *Manushi* 48, 1988, and 'Towards more just norms for marriage', *Manushi* 53, 1989, Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita, 'Inheritance rights for women', *Manushi* 57, 1990.

3 See Ruth Vanita, 'Can Police Reform Husbands? The Crimes Against Women Cell, Delhi', *Manushi* 40, 1987.

However, if we think that by doing this work we will end violence against women, or preserve the institution of heterosexual monogamy and at the same time end such violence, we are under the same delusion as the wife who appeals to women activists to reform her husband. Despite their political differences, today, most feminists and non-feminists, rightists and leftists, Hindus, Muslims and Christians in India share the basic assumption that, although there are many abuses within heterosexual monogamy, this system is nevertheless the best available.

Let me illustrate this via an example of reform in the marriage-law A couple of years ago some women's organizations were drafting proposals for changes in the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act, a process that is still underway. It so happens that the Hindu Marriage Act (no doubt inadvertently) does not, in its initial definition of the parameters of the act, specify the sex of the partners involved. Last year, two young women tried to take advantage of this when they filed an application to marry under the act. They could not be legally prevented but were pressured by officials to give up the idea.[4] But women's organizations have not taken note of this feature or pressed to write it more clearly into the body of the act Nor have they even considered challenging the system of monogamy enforced by this act

Why should not three or four or more people of any sex be able to marry? If this were allowed, the institution of marriage would be open to such radical alteration that it would no longer be the same institution Different communities in India have practised polygamy and polyandry, practices now outlawed. The undesirability of the economic and other inequalities built into these practices tends to be confused with the practices themselves, a residual puritanism makes these inequalities more visible than those that are built into heterosexual monogamy Monogamy as an absolute principle is full of holes, since if it is an absolute, as some would argue, then divorce and remarriage are wrong. Conversely, if serial monogamy is acceptable, why should group marriage not be acceptable?

I am not raising these questions merely as a theoretical exercise: they have a direct bearing on practice For instance, the desire to abolish verbal *talaq* often confuses the inequality built into it with the practice itself which is merely the practice of divorce on the basis of irretrievable breakdown of marriage. That one partner should be able to end the marriage unilaterally without citing reasons is based on the idea that no one should be forced to live with someone they do not want to live with. They should not have to prove anything or to vilify the person concerned before deciding to leave What is undesirable about verbal talaq is that under Indian Muslim law only men have this right. In fact, Islamic law has a provision in operation in some Muslim countries, called *khula*, whereby a woman can exercise a similar right. She can leave her husband even if he does not want to leave her, merely by making a certain payment, just as on talaq, a husband is supposed to pay *mehr*.

Introducing khula and building economic safeguards into talaq, which is easily done because Muslim marriage is a contract and any kind of safeguard or provision can be written into the *nikahnama* or marriage contract, would transform Muslim marriage law into the most progressive law in the country No marriage law in India allows divorce on grounds of irretrievable breakdown which most other democracies allow. In India, if one partner wants to leave and the other does not, the one who wants to leave has to prove that the other is an undesirable person rather than alleging simple incompatibility Why does abolishing talaq have an appeal that introducing khula does not? Because the near-universal assumption that heterosexual monogamy is the best practice makes it easier for people to accept the idea of imprisoning men within monogamous marriage in the same way as women already are, but difficult to accept the idea of providing women and men with easy escape routes from marriage

In fact, no society practices only heterosexual monogamy. Indian society certainly does not This is because most people are dissatisfied, to different degrees, with being men or women I agree with Monique Wittig that the word 'woman' is no more redeemable than the word 'nigger' or, I might add, the word *chamar* or *choora*, and the word 'man' than the word 'white' [5] The categories 'woman' and 'man' are illogical categories based on certain parts of the body which may or may not be used to certain predefined ends. We might as well divide all human beings into big-eared and small-eared people and hope to work out a sane society based on such a division

At some point in its development, any women's movement must take one of two directions both at the level of thought and of action, or, more likely, must work out some combination of both directions (*i*) that of repairing the structures of heterosexual marriage and family, making them somewhat more equitable or (*ii*) that of rethinking gender and sexuality to liberate both women and men into developing different kinds of family or collective living. People in any society always, incipiently, work out alternative forms of familial living. What a movement can do is to foreground and validate these forms and encourage others

Women's movements in India have, by and large, only taken the first direction – that of reforming marriage and the laws and social codes related to it Their concentration

4 The case was widely and sympathetically reported in national dailies While there have been several cases of women marrying each other in temples and proceeding to live as spouses (for example, the policewomen Lila and Urmila in Bhopal, 1987, Neeru and Meenu in Faridabad, 1993), this was the only one I know of where two women proposed to take advantage of the lacuna in the Hindu Marriage Act and have their marriage registered in court

5 'The Straight Mind' (1980), in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston Beacon Press 1992), 29-30

on people as victims rather than agents and their reluctance to question gender and sexuality categories has fostered a stress on equity rather than liberation. Their self-characterization as 'women's movements' and dropping the word 'liberation' is not fortuitous. Today, many people outside of women's movements are far more advanced in thinking through and enacting liberatory modes of life, relationship and community.

In all societies, persons who are dissatisfied with the heterosexual system to the point of not wishing to gain the rewards of fitting into it, have devised different ways of opting out, individually and/or collectively. As Wittig says: 'The refusal to become (or to remain) heterosexual always meant to refuse to become a man or a woman, consciously or not.'[6] Serena Nanda has examined *hijra* (eunuch) communities as experimenting with such ways of opting out. Hijras function as one model of difference. More than one older woman friend has told me, half playfully, half seriously 'I'm a hijra', which reminds me of Virginia Woolf's statement that she was neither a man nor a woman. Young Indian lesbian friends have expressed to me feelings similar to my own, to the effect that they do not think of themselves as women or as men. As an experiment I have asked many non-feminist women friends of differing classes, age and marital status whether they would like to be reborn as men or women, and have received the answer: 'Not as a woman'. Some have said they would like to be birds.

Unfortunately, the articulation of such feelings has often been silenced in feminist circles, by ascribing it to low self-esteem or even self-hatred. On the contrary, I would argue that it is related to high self-esteem, to the perception of oneself as not the complementary of a man, not wishing to play any role vis-a-vis a man that could be defined as womanly, and therefore, not being, for any practical purpose, a woman. Emphasizing one's womanhood while opting out of a bad marriage produces the kind of victim narrative which so many modern Indian women fiction writers have endlessly repeated, where the body of the text is taken up with the struggle to get out and the text ends as soon as the heroine does get out, because there is logically nowhere for her to go except another marriage, suicide or lonely depression.

I shall briefly look at some other kinds of narrative produced historically by persons who opted out of heterosexual structures, and at the inheritance of these traditions by some modern Indian writers. Working on women *bhakta* and *sant* poets was a very enlightening experience for me (as is my current experience of working on the lives of European medieval saints), because it showed how their lives and work followed a trajectory of critique, protest and opting out of the heterosexual system, followed by the forming of alternative community and friendship networks. That *bhakti* movements criticised class, caste and religious differences and defied institutional authority of various kinds has often been demonstrated.[7] Many inheritors of such movements exist today, for example, throughout the period of terrorism and police brutality in Punjab, the Radhaswami Satsang continued to function as a mass forum where Hindus and Sikhs met and worshipped together.

What is common to the legends of almost all bhaktas and sants, men and women, is that they refused to be good spouses and good parents. Many women refused to marry; those who were married left their husbands. This feature is also found in the lives of medieval mystics in Europe, women who chose to be nuns rather than wives. Frideswide in medieval England is supposed to have performed a miracle which blinded her prospective husband and ended his pursuit of her; Avvaiyyar in medieval Tamil Nadu is supposed to have performed a miracle which turned her into an old woman so that her prospective husband would stop pursuing her.[8] Both men and women altered gender categories by trying to strip them of meaning – by walking naked, by growing their hair long, and by rethinking the terms. Thus 12th century Kannada Virashaiva poet Dasimayya writes:

> Suppose you cut a tall bamboo in two;
> make the bottom piece a woman, the headpiece a man;
> rub them together till they kindle: tell me now
> the fire that's born,
> is it male or female, O Ramanatha?[9]

A new relation to the universe is often envisaged through the idea of being an animal. The last boundary to be crossed is that of the species. To acknowledge that we are animals and that that is the most important thing we have in common across class, caste, nation, gender lines is perhaps a necessary first step towards dissolving those lines. As the 14th century Sufi Nizamuddin Auliya remarked: 'When a lion emerges from the forest, no one bothers to ask whether it is male or female'.[10] Hindu thought provides the space for such a move – all the deities are accompanied by non-human creatures, and some like Ganesh, are combinations of animal, human and divine. Mahatma Gandhi suggested that we look past our contempt, inherited from the British, for cow-worship, and consider the cow as a symbol of nature, a reminder of the need to respect other species from whom we take so much. In the writings of women sant poets, deer and cows often figure as images of victimized women;

6 'One Is Not Born A Woman' (1981), in *The Straight Mind*, 13.

7 Devotional movements which began in south India in the 6th century, spread to almost all regions of the country. There was much regional variation but the movements shared a mystical tendency to stress the oneness of all life. Bhaktas usually expressed devotion to an incarnate god or goddess and sants to a disembodied divine principle.

8 Another medieval English saint Wilgefortis miraculously grew a beard to discourage a prospective husband. Women worshipped her under the name of 'Uncumber' because they hoped she would uncumber them of their husbands.

9. A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1985, 110.

10. *Manushi*, special issue on Women Bhakta Poets (January-June 1989), 1.

conversely, small creatures that can fly are symbols of the powerless that become powerful. The 13th century Varkari sant poet Muktabai writes:

An ant flew to the sky
and swallowed the sun.
Another wonder –
a barren woman had a son.
A scorpion went to the underworld,
set its foot on the Shesh Nag's head.
A fly gave birth to a kite
Looking on, Muktabai laughed.[11]

The barren woman's son here may well be an image for the text itself, as in the popular saying about Mirabai:

One's name will live on through one's work
Consider this if you are wise.
Mira did not give birth to a son
Nor did she have any disciples.[12]

Outside of institutional structures of the family and the formal educational system, these women nevertheless wrote narratives of power and creativity. They functioned as models for other women. Mahatma Gandhi cited Mirabai as an example for women. When a little girl was born to a follower, he said he hoped she would become a Mirabai. This is interesting because normally a divorcee and a widow would not be cited as a model. There is a continuous tradition of such models and forums that women can appeal to, to legitimize opting out.

For instance, a friend's grandmother who did not get along with her husband, joined the Brahmakumaris. This took up most of her time, she was almost never in the house; since she had taken a vow of celibacy she had no further sexual relations with her husband and as the special food she cooked was unacceptable to the palate of the family, she ended up not cooking for anyone but herself. While the family resented this behaviour, they found it hard to forbid it. Another friend's aunt left her husband to join a Jaikishen ashram in Maharashtra. In India today, as in medieval Europe, the institutions of fasting and pilgrimages provide women with ways of controlling and accessing familial and individual patterns of life and mobility.

These traditions have also been inherited and transformed textually, for instance, by contemporary poets Suniti Namjoshi and Vikram Seth. These two writers have immense popularity and appeal; they are readable and widely accessible. Their writings show a blend of various traditions, Indian and non-Indian, and they often use animal tropes to suggest crossings of the boundaries of race, gender, culture, nationality and sexuality. Less containable than human beings in categories of nationality and gender, animals, as they have figured in western and eastern mythologies, literatures, and even popular jokes and stories, often reveal the surprising commonalty of apparently distinct traditions.

Suniti Namjoshi is a feminist writer from Maharashtra who has lived in Canada and England for a large part of her creative life. In her writings, the protagonist is generally named 'Suniti' and inhabits a world populated by various human and nonhuman creatures and literal and mythical beasts who are in communication with one another. The Sanskrit first name functions in English as a marker of strangeness, while Suniti and those she meets are often rendered even stranger by unexpected attributes, as with the blue donkey who is the ultimate embodiment of meditative wisdom and Bhadravati, the lesbian cow – a comic send-up of the way Indian lesbians are often invisible to non-Indians. The attempts of cows and donkeys to interact with or keep their distance from lordly tigers suggest the difficulties of survival in and struggle with the dominant culture.

In one preface, Namjoshi connects her choice of a beastly persona with her questioning of gender stereotyping, and also with her pantheistic Hindu background wherein a beast is not inherently inferior to a human being because the same spirit may in various reincarnations inhabit both human and nonhuman bodies. She concludes this meditation by asking, 'But what sort of beast was I?'[13]

Vikram Seth's narratives also draw on old Indian traditions of friendship between human and nonhuman animals such as Yudhishthir and his dog, Ram and Jatayu, and western traditions such as St. Francis and his wolves and lambs. In *Beastly Tales from Here and There* (Penguin, Delhi, 1992), each of the ten narrative poems is named for two creatures of different species. The asymmetry of these unconventionally matched pairs suggests the oddness of alliances that are not within normative paradigms These are poems about friendship – same-sex friendship and love, and also cross-sex friendship and love; in all of them, however, the question of gender, of 'he' or 'she' is rendered unimportant by the use of species sameness and difference to mask it. One has to go back to check whether the elephant or tragopan were both male or the two mice both female.

In Seth's 1994 libretto, *Arion and the Dolphin*, the human-nonhuman friendship narrative, briefly and comically explored in *The Golden Gate*, appears centrally and seriously. It can be read as an ironical version of the old story of the faithful animal who dies for a human being; however, its romantic and passionate tone makes it susceptible to being read as a coded homoerotic text.

Thus, Indian society like other societies, has continuous traditions of creating non-victim narratives, narratives of opting out of gender categories and forming new kinds of alliances across various boundaries. We need to make these narratives, past and present, more visible, by researching them, writing about them and celebrating them.

11 Translated by me with Champa Limaye, in Ruth Vanita, 'Three women sants of Maharashtra', *Manushi*, January-June 1989, 46

12. Translated by me, in Ruth Vanita and Madhu Kishwar, 'Poison to nectar the life and work of Mirabai', *Manushi*, January-June 1989, 75.

13 Preface to 'The jackass and the lady', *Because of India Selected Poems and Fables*, London Onlywomen Press, 1989, 29

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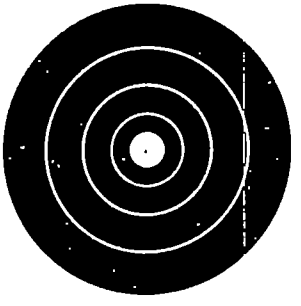

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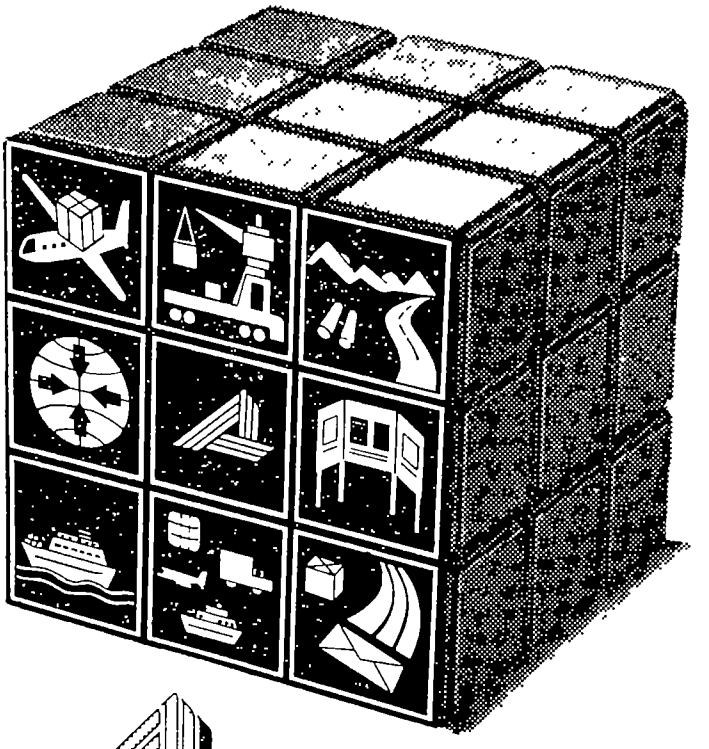

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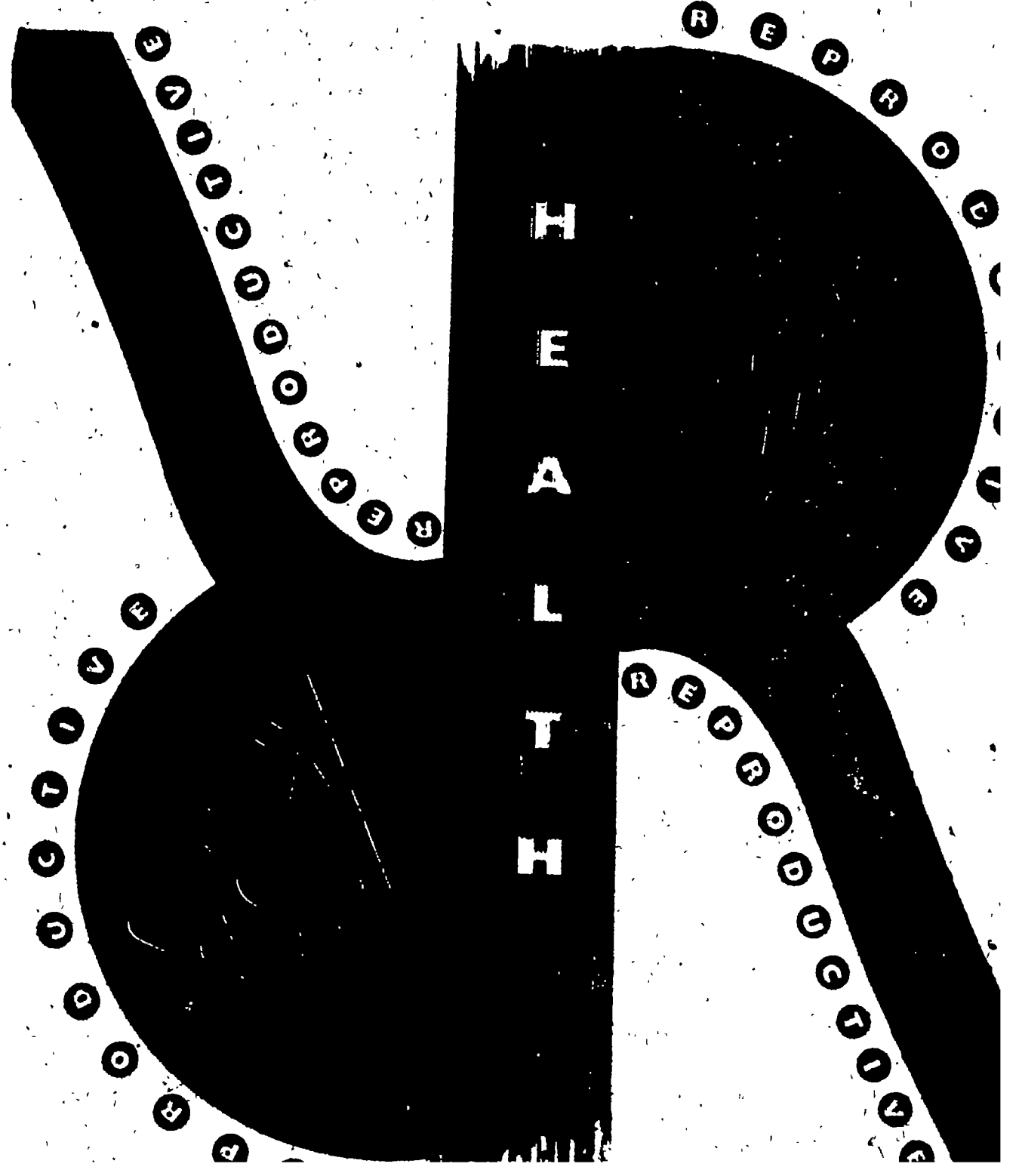

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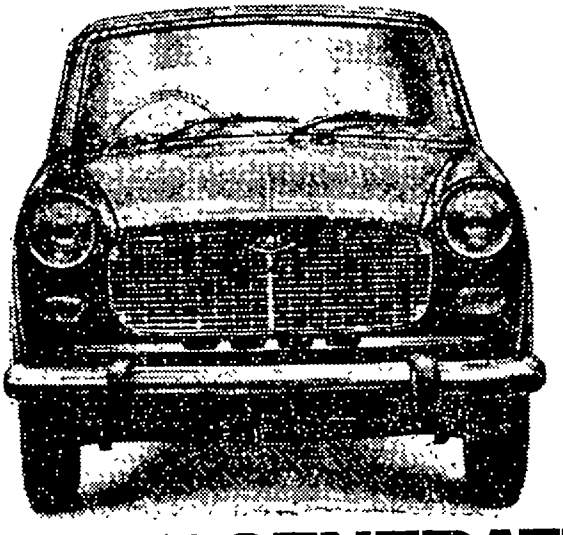

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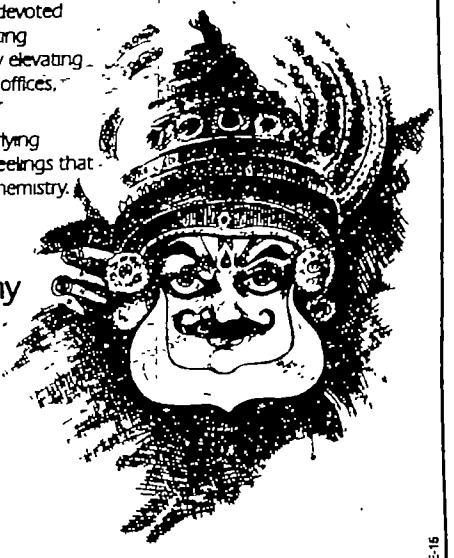

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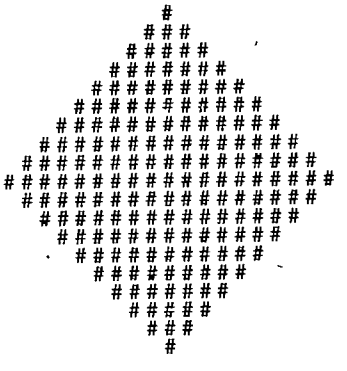

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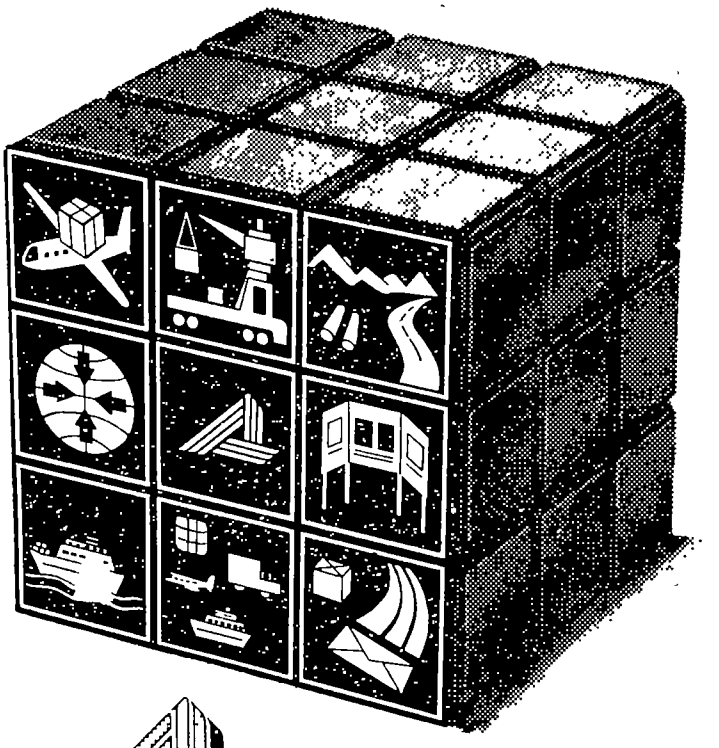

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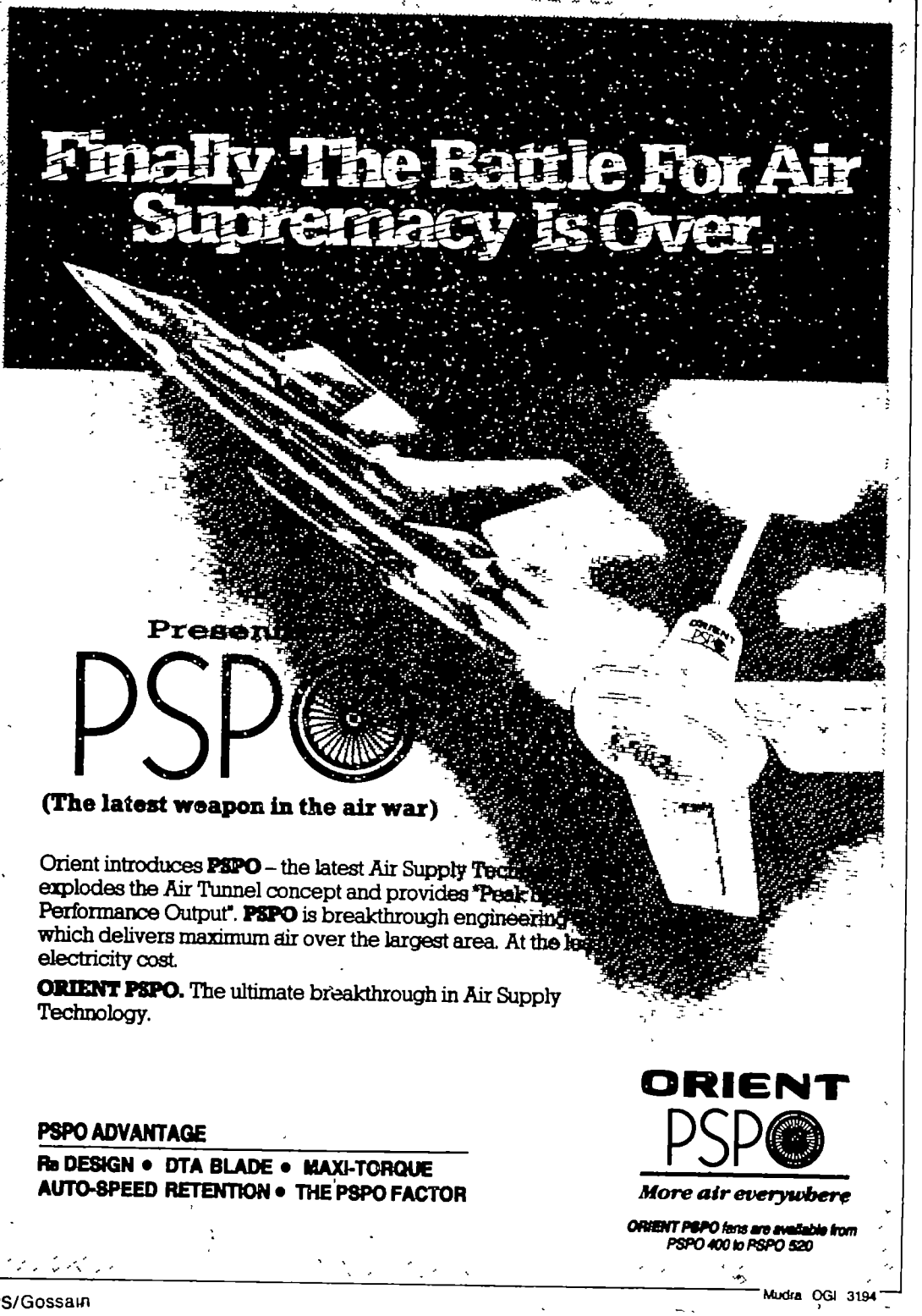

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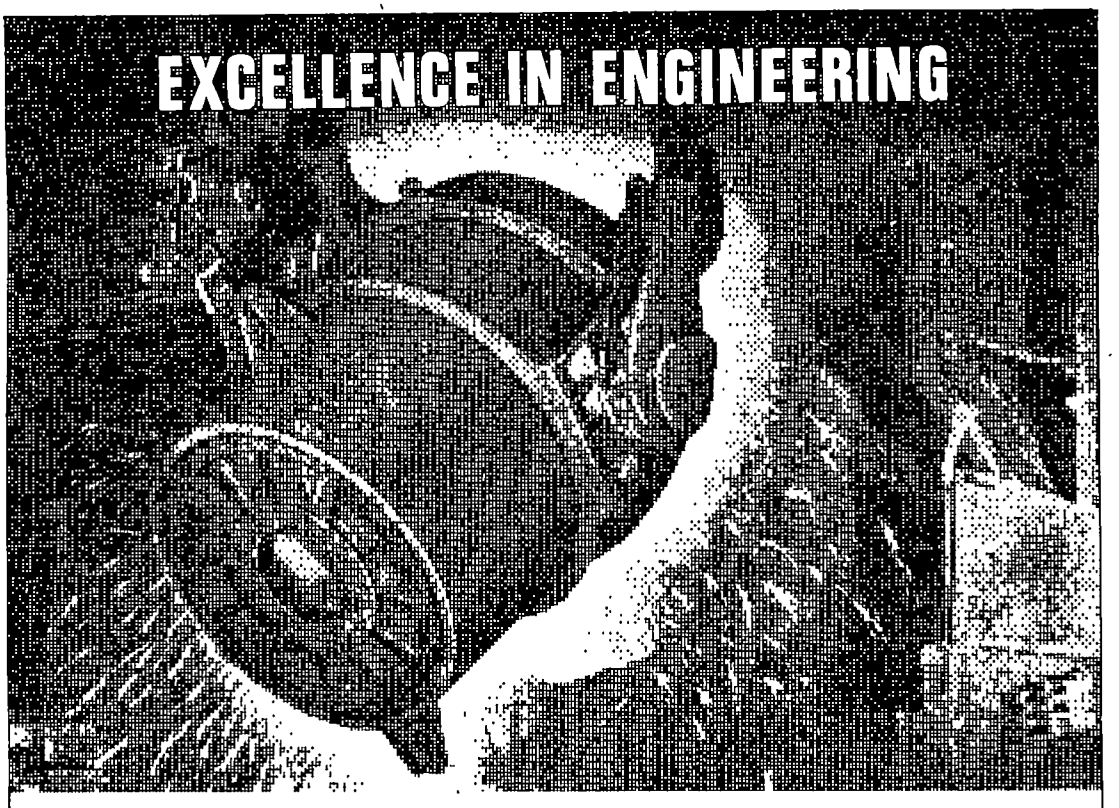

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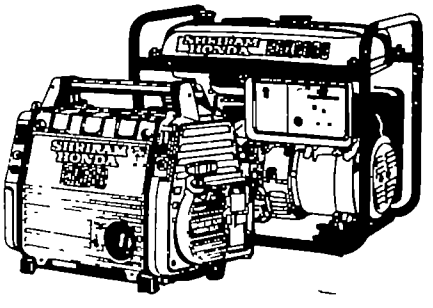

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COVER
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The problem

AT THE International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in September 1994, the world community effectively wrote a new agenda for national action and international cooperation for population and development for the next 20 years. This new approach is firmly based on the right to development and on equality between women and men. At its heart is development with and by the people. The Programme of Action proposed at Cairo clearly sets out the development framework within which population policies should be formulated in keeping with universally agreed principles of human rights (UN, 1994).

At Cairo, the nations of the world agreed that the focus should be on individual needs instead of demographic targets and that governments should give special attention to the education of girls, the health of women, the survival of infants and young children, and in general the empowerment of women. At the same time they should provide comprehensive reproductive health services to enable couples to achieve their reproductive goals by determining freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children. If governments ensure that this basic package of social policies and reproductive health services is in place, they will simultaneously make strides toward greater social equity and reduce high rates of population growth.

National priorities for implementation are a matter for each country to determine and countries have the primary responsibility for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Within countries, implementation is the responsibility of all groups in society – government at all levels, parliamentarians, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, the corporate sector, the academic community, and the media.

An important principle for action is the freedom of choice of each individual. This was first enunciated a generation ago, and it remains vitally important today. The ICPD consensus strengthened this principle and gave it practical expression. One of the important achievements of the Cairo consensus, in fact, was to establish the place of family planning programmes in the wider context of reproductive health. Cairo's new approach has far-reaching implications, for policies, programmes, services and contraceptive technology, and marks a paradigm shift away from a demographic orientation. Operationalizing this paradigm shift presents a major challenge.

The ICPD process brought the international community together around one of the most pressing problems of our time and enabled both developed and developing countries to reach consensus on a wide variety of issues. The challenge now is to transform this consensus into action. It is indeed heartening that India has taken a lead to begin the process of translating these concepts into its national programme. The first major step that the government took was to remove contraceptive targets. As of April of this year, the country has been 'target free'! Removal of contraceptive targets was an essential prerequisite for moving the ICPD process forward at the national level and to implement a reproductive health approach. However, to translate reproductive rhetoric into reality, two important issues must be addressed. First, a paradigm shift is essential. And second, packages of good quality services must be designed and implemented to address reproductive health needs of people.

A shift in paradigm implies a change in the focus: from a population control approach of reducing numbers to developing programmes designed to address the reproductive health needs of people. A change in the culture of the programme from one that focused on achieving targets to one that now aims at providing a range of quality services is essential (Pachauri, 1995).

This agenda recognizes the need to change the programme's current thrust on achieving demographic objectives of societal fertility reduction to an explicit concern for assisting clients to meet their personal reproductive goals. At the aggregate level, it means that instead of being responsible for reducing the rate of population growth, reproductive health programmes would become responsible for reducing the burden of unplanned and unwanted childbearing and related morbidity and mortality. For achieving demographic goals of reducing the rate of population growth at the macro-level, broader social and economic policies are required (Jain and Bruce, 1994); particularly, policies to promote women's education and empowerment.

But will this paradigm shift make a difference to controlling the exploding numbers? Is this the solution for a country which is expected to cross the billion mark in a few years, and where people suffer from all kind of shortages and where population pressures are highly visible and palpable? The population of India in mid-1995 estimated at around 920 million, is growing annually at the rate of 1.94%; 18 million people are added every year to an already large population base. The current growth rate of 1.94% is not very different from that of 1.96% estimated 40 years earlier because in this period both the birth rate and death rates have declined by about 13 points leaving the growth rate almost unchanged (Srinivasan, 1996). In the meanwhile, about Rs. 60 billion have been spent on the family planning programme since its inception in 1951. Several Asian countries such as China, Thailand, Korea, and Indonesia

have achieved much lower growth rates even though they started family planning programmes a decade or more later.

As estimated by the Sample Registration System (SRS), the crude birth rate in India has declined from 37.2 in 1971 to 28.6 in 1994. The total fertility rate (TFR) – the average number of children born to a woman during her reproductive span – which is perhaps a more important indicator, also declined from 5.2 in 1972 to 3.6 in 1992. Since 1970, the use of modern contraceptive methods has risen from about 10% to 40%. The figures vary widely by state, from 53% in Maharashtra to 20% in U.P. and Bihar. The most striking aspect of contraceptive use in India is the predominance of sterilization, which accounts for more than 85% of total modern contraceptive use Female sterilization accounts for 90% of sterilizations. The lack of knowledge about and access to other contraceptive methods reflects the Family Welfare Programme's historical emphasis on sterilizations. Increasing contraceptive choice, particularly temporary methods for delaying and spacing pregnancies, is now seen as a high priority (World Bank, 1996).

Demographers who have been centre stage for decades studying population and fertility trends and predicting future scenarios – often gloomy and even catastrophic – have begun to refine and redefine fertility measures. Fertility is described as 'wanted' and 'unwanted' fertility. Family planning programmes can and should address unwanted fertility. In fact, the National Family Health Survey shows that there is a great unmet need for family planning – that many women in this country who want to limit and space births are not doing so.

Therefore, they must be provided access to contraception through quality services. Such measures would bring down unwanted fertility. But the problem of wanted fertility cannot and should not be addressed through family planning programmes lest they become coercive. If the desire for large families is to be effected then socio-economic policies to enhance women's education and employment opportunities are necessary. Studies the world over show that when women are empowered, primarily through education, fertility and infant mortality rates decline.

While India's fertility transition has begun and fertility will continue to decline, there are significant regional and inter-state variations. The northern Hindi belt where the fertility rates are high are also states that depict gloomy statistics for all other socio-development indicators. But these states also show high levels of unmet need for family planning. If health and family planning needs are addressed in a sensitive and caring way, and if women are educated and empowered, all health indicators including fertility rates will improve in these states as in the southern states.

A reproductive health approach means that people have the ability to reproduce and regulate their fertility; women are able to go through pregnancy and childbirth safely; the outcome of pregnancy is successful in terms of maternal and infant survival and well being; and couples are able to have sexual relations free of the fear of pregnancy and of contracting disease (Fathallah, 1988). The proponents of the reproductive health framework believe that reproductive health is inextricably linked to the subject of reproductive rights and freedom, and to women's status and empowerment. Thus, the reproductive health approach extends beyond the narrow confines of family planning to encompass all aspects of human sexuality and reproductive health needs during the various stages of the life-cycle. Programmes must, therefore, be redesigned to address diverse needs at different stages of the life-cycle.

In addressing the needs of women and men, the reproductive health approach places an emphasis on developing programmes that enable clients to make informed choices; receive screening, education and counselling services for responsible and healthy sexuality; access services for preventing unwanted pregnancy, safe abortion, maternity care and child survival, and for the prevention and management of reproductive illnesses including reproductive tract infections (RTIs), sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and gynaecological problems. Thus, reproductive health programmes are concerned with a set of specific health problems, identifiable clusters of client groups, and distinctive goals and strategies.

If reproductive health programmes are to be designed to address clients' needs, an important implication for their implementation is to ensure that the quality of services is improved from the perspective of the client. Several studies in India have highlighted the wide social and cultural gap between the providers and users of services. In order to bridge this, attention should be focused on the users' perspective within the overall framework of the service delivery system. There is a need to specially focus on women as they constitute a major client group or users of these programmes and also face the problem of access, both physical and social, to health services (Pachauri, 1995).

There is ample data worldwide that underscores the high burden of reproductive morbidity among women. According to the World Bank, about one-third of the total disease burden in developing country women age 15-44 is linked to health problems related to pregnancy, childbirth, abortion, human immuno-deficiency virus (HIV), and

reproductive tract infections (World Bank, 1993). Among diseases for which cost effective interventions exist, reproductive health problems account for the majority of the disease burden in women of this age group.

There are also substantial data to show that Indian women bear a high burden of reproductive ill health (Bang et al., 1989; Bang and Bang, 1991; Pachauri and Gittlesohn, 1994; Jejeebhoy and Rama Rao, 1992). Studies show that the heavy load of reproductive morbidity among Indian women is an outcome of their poverty, their powerlessness, low social status, malnutrition, infection, high fertility and lack of access to health care. Thus, socio-economic and biological determinants operate synergistically throughout the lives of poor women to undermine their health, resulting in high levels of morbidity and mortality. There is, therefore, an urgent need to design and implement services to address women's reproductive health needs. Women-centred, gender-sensitive services must be organized and implemented (Pachauri, 1995).

Gender inequalities favour men in most societies in India and other developing countries, and sexual and reproductive health decisions are made by men. Therefore, there is a growing realization that programme efforts will have limited impact unless men are reached. While focusing on women and addressing their reproductive health needs, special efforts must be made to encourage men to take responsibility for family planning and reproductive health (Pachauri, 1995). Research on sexuality, especially in the field of HIV/AIDS, has highlighted the inadequacy of strategies that target only women. Because of their gender-power equation, women are specially vulnerable but unable to negotiate changes in sexual behaviour. Research on sexual negotiation has dramatically underscored the need for involving men in programmes that aim at bringing about changes in sexual behaviour for the prevention of infection. However, such behavioural change is relevant not only for the prevention of infection but also for addressing other reproductive health problems. Therefore, male involvement and participation is essential.

Most government programmes have generally ignored the fact that reproduction takes place through sexual relations which are conditioned by broader gender relations. A review of conventional demographic and family planning literature illustrates that the population field has neglected issues related to sexuality, sexual decision-making, gender roles and relationships, and has focused largely on outcomes such as fertility decline, unwanted pregnancy, and more recently on infection. Clearly, social constructions of sexuality and gender relations impact on reproductive health. But because they are generally considered to be politically sensitive, these issues have been neglected.

How long can we skirt around these issues when men, women and especially young people are being increasingly exposed to unwanted pregnancy and HIV infection due to lack of information and services? A proposed approach is to place sexuality and gender relations at the centr of reproductive health programmes; to empower wome to ensure that their health needs are addressed; and t encourage male participation by ensuring that men tak responsibility for family planning, family support an child-rearing (Germain et al., 1994).

Although there is a high burden of reproductive morbidity, cost-effective interventions are also becoming increasingly available. The challenge is to develop cost effective packages of good quality services to address the needs of specific client groups in various settings and to make these available and accessible to all, and especially to the poor and the disadvantaged.

But is this feasible for resource poor settings? Providing comprehensive reproductive health services to all is a desirable goal but because there is considerable variability in the organizational capacity of programmes in the different regions and states of the country, the extent to which a programme might expand without compromising the quality and effectiveness of existing services must be seriously considered. There is clearly a need to prioritize and to develop a phased approach with an incremental addition of health interventions that require greater skills and resources (Pachauri, 1995).

Since men and women have multiple reproductive health needs, an important guiding principle should be to design services to address these multiple needs. Therefore, an important challenge is to provide integrated services to the user. However, integration is a buzzword that has revisited the population and health fields for decades. And yet, many, if not most health services are provided through vertical programmes. Services for family planning, child survival, and AIDS and STDs are particular examples.

There is, however, a growing realization that horizontal integration of services must be achieved if reproductive and sexual health and rights are to be universally realized There must be a convergence of services at the users' level, particularly since the same service providers deliver services at the peripheral level. These services are, however, administered through multiple vertical programmes originating from different government departments, funded by multiple donors, each with its own agenda. Such a multiplicity and fragmentation of services can be wasteful and inefficient.

It would be counterproductive to have reproductive health as yet another vertical programme. In fact, the reproductive health approach provides an opportunity for integrating many of the programmes that are currently in place and others that are planned. In India, for example, the government has implemented the family planning programme for the past four decades. The child survival programme has been in place since the 1980s. Services for promoting safe motherhood have been initiated more recently through the Child Survival Safe Motherhood (CSSM) programme. A programme for the prevention of AIDS and STDs is also a more recent initiative.

The challenge is to strengthen all these services by xpanding their reach and improving their quality and by ffectively integrating additional reproductive health ser-ices within these ongoing programmes. Although adding ew services and improving quality are major challenges, ıey do not require a quantum increase in resources in the ndian context. It is increasing coverage by filling current aps in staff and infrastructure that requires substantial dditional resources (Measham and Heaver, 1995).

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is plan-ing to implement a Reproductive and Child Health 'rogramme. An essential package of services is proposed or nation-wide implementation. In India, shifting to the eproductive health approach implies changing the imple-nentation signals sent to 250,000 family welfare staff. Client atisfaction would become the programme's primary goal, vith demographic impact a secondary, though important oncern. Broadening the existing package of services is ıecessary, and improving the quality of services becomes he top priority. A quiet revolution is necessary in the way he programme is planned and managed (Measham and Ieaver, 1995).

Three points deserve emphasis as this programme is lesigned and implemented. First, most of the services ncluded in the essential package are already included in he Health and Family Welfare Programme in India but are ıften not provided for want of resources, adequate training, nd other reasons. Second, child survival interventions are lso included. A third important point is that the services ncluded in the essential package are among the most cost-ffective health interventions.

Although some elements of the package are, neces-arily, more cost-effective than others, improvements in ıealth depend on making the whole set available because hese services are inextricably linked and their effectiveness lepends on ensuring that they are effectively integrated. Consequently, no priorities are set for interventions within he essential package If sufficient resources are not avail-ble to provide the whole package, it is better that it be ntroduced in phases rather than attempt to strengthen ndividual services on a piecemeal basis (Measham and Ieaver, 1995).

Since family planning targets have been used in the ıast for monitoring the programme, an important issue :onfronting the policy planners and service providers is how he programme should be monitored and evaluated now that argets have been removed. The impact of the family plan-ıing programme in India has, so far, been measured prima-ily in terms of its contribution to increasing contraceptive ırevalence and to decreasing fertility. Since these indica-ors do not reflect programme quality or the impact of ırogrammes on reducing reproductive health morbidity and nortality, they are not adequate for measuring the impact ıf reproductive health programmes. These criteria for ırogramme success or failure must, therefore, be modified Indicators for measuring the quality of health services from the perspective of the client are, therefore, urgently needed.

The government has taken rapid strides at the policy level to promote the reproductive health approach. It is, however, useful to learn from past experience. The government's pioneering and far-sighted policies have frequently been poorly implemented resulting in a growing disenchantment with the public system. While there will be differentials in programme success in a country of this scale and diversity, the government should recognize its limitations and make a concerted effort to work in partnership with a range of institutions including educational and research institutions, the corporate sector, NGOs, panchayats, and most importantly with the people, to achieve its ambitious goals. There should be a strong focus to decentralize and devolve power to the people so that their participation is sought in all efforts to improve their quality to life.

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Adolescent sexuality and fertility

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ADOLESCENT reproductive health needs are poorly understood and ill served in India. While the needs of children or pregnant women are acknowledged in national programmes, neither services nor research have focused on the unique health and information needs of adolescents. In a country in which adolescents aged 10-19 represent one-fifth of the population, the health consequences of this neglect take on enormous proportions. This paper documents the existing information on sexual and reproductive behaviour, and knowledge and attitudes among the adolescent (10-19) and youth populations (up to age 24) in India, and thereby makes programme and research recommendations related to adolescent reproductive health.[1]

In India, traditionally, the transition from childhood to adulthood among females has tended to be sudden. On the one hand, as a result of the poor nutritional status of the average Indian adolescent, menarche occurs relatively late; therefore the biological onset of adolescence, at least among females, may be later in I than elsewhere. On the other hand, m riage and the consequent onset of se activity and fertility occur far earlier t in many regions of the world, thrus adolescent females early into adulth frequently soon after regular menst tion is established and before phys maturity is attained.

Since the situation of an adoles varies widely by gender and region, adolescent girls and those from north states at a particular disadvantage, a b overview of the situation of adolesc is necessary at this juncture. About 3 of all adolescents continue to be illiter 20% of all boys, and 40% of all girls a 10-19 (International Institute for Pop tion Sciences (IIPS), 1995). School att dance among younger adolescent hardly universal: 76% of all boys and 5 of all girls aged 11-14 are in school. Ab one third of adolescents aged 15-19 w reported to be working in 1981 – 51% all boys, and 18% of all girls (Ministr Health and Family Welfare, 1993).

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1. The evidence reviewed here pertains largely to the recent evidence. Both quantitative and qualitative data are reviewed; qualitative data are particularly useful in examining sexual behaviour and its correlates So also, both published unpublished studies are reviewed Studies ra from those using inappropriate methodolo to those using highly qualitative methods, f large scale surveys to intensive in-depth stu of a handful of respondents. Extensive searc were conducted through the library of the Fa Planning Association of India to cover mate which included the main key words pertinen adolescents, their sexual and reproduc behaviour, knowledge and attitudes Anot important source of information was a works on Sexual Aspects of AIDS/STD Preventio India, held at the Tata Institute of Social Scie in Bombay in 1993 from which several pa dealt with the sexual behaviour of Indian yo Considerable recent data are drawn from results of the National Family Health Sur (International Institute for Population Scien (IIPS), 1995)

These figures grossly underestimate female economic activity rates. Girls are both more likely to work and work for longer duration's than rural boys, and since girls are typically constrained from activities requiring much contact with the outside world, they are less likely than boys to work in wage activities. Their activities remain invisible and undervalued (Jejeebhoy, 1993; Bhende, 1995). Gender disparities in food intake and access to health care, and growth patterns are evident from as early as the post neonatal stage. By adolescence, many girls are grossly underweight (Srikantia, 1989a; Government of Maharashtra and UNICEF-WIO, 1991).

As in other countries, adolescent mortality rates are lower than mortality rates at younger and older ages, and gender disparities in mortality are narrow. But unlike other countries, females in India, especially in rural areas, experience slightly higher mortality rates than males. Among the rural population aged 15-19, age specific mortality ranged from 2 2 among males to 3.4 among females; among the urban population, corresponding rates are 1.3 and 1.7 (IIPS, 1995)

Gender disparities at these ages is largely explained by poor reproductive health and high maternal mortality among adolescent females. 15% of all deaths of rural women aged 15-24 are attributed to diseases of childbirth and pregnancy (the second largest cause of death in this age group following accidents and violence).

Within the typical gender stratified social structure in India, adolescent girls are especially disadvantaged. Given the seclusion norms which are widespread from puberty onwards, adolescent girls are unlikely to have much exposure to the outside world. Without education, a skill or opportunity for employment, and with relatively poor health and nutrition, they are caught in a web of ignorance, ill-health, lifelong economic dependency, physical seclusion, early marriage and frequent childbearing.

Sexual activity commences at an early age for the majority of Indian women. Moreover, the onset of sexual activity occurs largely within the context of marriage, is consistent with the strong emphasis placed on female 'purity' and chastity, and is sanctioned by family elders. Less can be inferred about adolescent males.

Despite laws stipulating the legal age at marriage as 18 for females and 21 for males, early marriage continues to be the norm in India especially among females even in the 1990s. The median age at marriage is 16 years and as many as 40% of all women aged 15-19 are already married (IIPS, 1995). In rural areas, almost two in three females aged 20-24 were married by age 18; one third, by age 15; and 15% even before age 13. Moreover, cohabitation (*gauna*) also occurs early. Among women aged 20-24, as many as 22% of rural women and 8% of urban women cohabited by the age of 15. In India on the whole, about half of all young women are presumed sexually active by age 18; and almost one in five by the time they are 15.

Nationally, there is evidence that the prevalence of adolescent marriages is declining. Even so, there appears to have been only a modest change over the last decade. In 1961, for example, as many as 70% of all adolescent females aged 15-19 were currently married (Pathak and Ram, 1993). By 1981, this fell to 44%, and by 1992-93 to 39%. Wide regional variation persists in age at marriage and at consummation. For instance, in the four large northern states – Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and especially Rajasthan – adolescent marriage continues to be widespread, and the median age at marriage is 15 or less.

Given the highly conservative attitudes towards sexual behaviour in India, few studies have attempted to elicit information on sexual behaviour, whether pre-marital or within marriage. The few that do refer more commonly to pre-marital rather than marital sexual activity, to males rather than females, and to both the current experience of adolescents and college aged youth and the retrospective experience of the adult population. Results are not, by and large, representative of the general population, since surveys have usually focused on the educated, urban, and English-speaking population, hardly typical of the average Indian. Despite serious limitations in study designs and methodologies, these studies remain the only ones of their kind in India, and their results provide a good starting point for a discussion on adolescent sexual activity.

Beset by methodological weaknesses, and not necessarily representative of the population at large, studies on adolescent and college-aged men suggest the following disturbing picture of pre-marital sexual activity among adolescent boys:

Roughly one in four to one in five has engaged in sexual relations. These rates are reported among school and college students responding through self-administered questionnaires in English (see, for example, Watsa, 1993; Goparaju, 1993; Savara and Sridhar, 1994; Sehgal et al., 1992), as well as other populations, responding in local languages (see, for example, (Savara and Sridhar, 1994; Bansal, 1992). Somewhat lower rates are reported in a study in Gujarat, in which, in face to face interviews, only 16% of rural boys, and 9% of urban college boys admitted sexual activity (Sharma and Sharma, 1995). Higher rates are reported by the self-selected sample responding to a magazine survey (Savara and Sridhar, 1991).

Sexual initiation occurs relatively early, by ages 17-19 in most cases, and spontaneously, often with older married women in the community, and without protection (Goparaju, 1993; Sharma and Sharma, 1995; Savara and Sridhar, 1994; Savara and Sridhar, 1991). Several (19-25%) of adolescent and college-aged males have had relations with a commercial sex worker (Watsa, 1993; Goparaju, 1993); many report, moreover, that sexual initiation occurred with a commercial sex worker (Savara and Sridhar, 1991; Sharma and Sharma, 1995). There is also concern, from obscure references made by them, that adolescent boys are being solicited for paid sexual relations (Bhende, 1995; 1994). Adolescent males consis-

tently report sexual relations with older married women residing in their neighbourhoods (Goparaju, 1993; Sharma and Sharma, 1995)

Relationships are rarely steady. Two in three respondents reporting sexual activity have had relations with multiple – an average of four – partners. Moreover, sexual relations occur, for the most part, spontaneously and surreptitiously, depending largely on opportunities for privacy (Goparaju, 1993). Homosexual contacts are not unknown among sexually active adolescent males: 3% in face-to-face interviews, (Savara and Sridhar, 1994), 10% in self-administered surveys (Watsa, 1993), but one in four in the self-selected sample of magazine surveys (Savara and Sridhar, 1991). Finally, condom use is rare and irregular. Even among the educated – school and college students – condoms were rarely used (Goparaju, 1993; Jain, 1994). Among largely illiterate truck cleaners, as many as 94% of sexually active adolescents had engaged in unprotected sex (Bansal, 1992); in rural Gujarat, where the majority of premarital sexual activity occurred with a commercial sex worker, as many as 80% of adolescent boys had never used a condom (Sharma and Sharma, 1995).

Studies of sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents are rare. However, studies of the general population warn that young people constitute a neglected but high risk group. The typical patient at STD clinics is a young man barely out of adolescence (modal ages are 20-25) and of relatively low socio-economic status (for example, Hiramani and others, 1985); likewise the proportion of young females attending STD clinics has been increasing. The experience of counselling centres (Watsa, undated) suggests that STDs in the age group 15-25 have doubled over the course of the 1980s. Qualitative data from medical practitioners serving an urban slum suggest that sexually transmitted diseases are not unknown among this group, but treatment seeking tends to be delayed, presumably out of ignorance and embarrassment (Bhende, 1995). And 4% of adolescent truck cleaners (aged 15-19, median age 17), very likely an underestimate, reported a history of sexually transmitted disease (Bansal, 1992).

In short, despite wide inter-study variation in site, design, methodology and population, available studies paint a relatively consistent picture of considerable sexual activity and considerable high risk behaviour among adolescent and young men in India.

There are fewer studies of female sexual behaviour. The few existing studies contain a variety of designs intended to overcome the cultural reluctance to acknowledging sexual activity. These studies suggest consistently low levels – under 10% – of sexual activity, among such diverse groups as relatively well off English-speaking urban women (see, for example, Watsa, 1993; Indian Market Research Bureau, 1993, reported in Nag, 1993), and poor women in Nashik and Thane (Savara and Sridhar, 1993). Age at sexual initiation is, as expected, higher among females than among males, averaging 20 years in both groups of women. In-depth interviews with relatively poorly educated and low income adolescents, and their mothers in the slums of Bombay concludes that sexual activity is extremely limited (Bhende, 1995; 1994) Interviews with key informants, such as medical practitioners, suggested, however, that abortion and oral contraceptive use by adolescent girls was not unknown, thereby hinting that adolescents were probably somewhat more sexually active than suggested in direct interviews.

However, a rare community based study among rural, tribal women in Maharashtra, reports, on the basis of physical examinations, that nearly half of all unmarried and adolescent girls had already experienced sexual activity. These high levels are probably atypical of rural India as a whole, but nevertheless suggest that sexual activity among unmarried adolescents may not be as rare as is often believed (Bang et al., 1989).

A small in-depth study of 35 women in Bombay provides retrospective information from older women on their sexual experiences as married adolescents (George and Jaswal, 1995). Although results are not intended to be representative, they highlight the sexual vulnerability of newly married – usually adolescent – women. Results suggest that most of these women were totally unprepared for, and ignorant about, sexual intercourse. The first sexual experience with their husbands was typically described by these women as traumatic, distasteful and painful, the use of force was frequently mentioned.

Studies addressing sexual behaviour in general and adolescent sexual behaviour in particular remain rare, exploratory, and unrepresentative. They have employed a variety of methodologies, and serious questions remain regarding design, sample selection, sample loss and consequent potential biases, the representativeness of findings, as well as the reliability of responses. Results therefore must be interpreted cautiously, as a rough indication of prevailing levels and patterns. While the consistency of responses drawn from the variety of studies is intriguing, it should not deflect attention from their inherent methodological weaknesses, and from the need to develop sounder and more appropriate methodologies given the socio-cultural constraints prevailing in India.

Adolescent fertility in India occurs mainly among *married* adolescent females. Early onset of sexual activity and the pressure on young married women to prove their fertility as soon after marriage as possible results in high rates of adolescent fertility. As many as 36% of married adolescents aged 13-16 and 64% of those aged 17-19 are already mothers or are pregnant with their first child. Moreover, as family size preferences have begun to fall and contraception practised among older women, fertility appears to become increasingly concentrated in the adolescent ages: 11% of all births occurred to women aged 15-19 in 1971, rising to 13% in 1981 and 17% in 1992-93 (IIPS, 1995). Anecdotal evidence suggests that fertility among unmarried

adolescents is increasing, particularly in urban areas.[2]

Contraception is rarely practised among adolescent women or their husbands. Nationally, 7.1% of married women aged 15-19 were using contraception, compared to 21% among women aged 20-24 (IIPS, 1995). Methods that are suitable for adolescents are not easily available in practice. Oral contraceptives are rarely promoted in the programme and female controlled barrier methods are simply unavailable The condom is available, but grossly under-utilised among both adolescent and adult men There is, therefore, considerable unmet need for family planning, particularly for spacing births – 30% of married women aged 15-19 report a desire to delay the next birth (28%) or limit childbearing (2%), but are not using a contraceptive.

Pregnancy and motherhood in adolescence, before girls are physically fully developed, exposes them to acute health risks during pregnancy and childbirth. The extra nutritional demands of pregnancy come at the heels of the adolescent growth spurt, a period that itself requires additional iron and nutritional inputs; any shortfall can result in the further depletion of the already malnourished adolescent Pregnancy at an early age, before the adolescent is physically fully developed, can thus result in severe damage to the reproductive tract (Ramachandran, 1989).

Although data are sparse and largely hospital-based, the available evidence suggests that maternal deaths are considerably higher among adolescents than among older women – almost twice as high, according to estimates derived from a community-based survey in rural Andhra Pradesh (Bhatia, 1988; Acsadi and Johnson-Acsadi, 1990). Even in an urban, relatively low mortality hospital setting in Bombay, the maternal mortality ratio among women was 138 per 100,000 live births among women aged 20-29, but 206 per 100,000 live births among adolescents (Pachauri and Jamshedji, 1983).

Adolescents are also more likely to experience adverse pregnancy outcomes than older women. For example, 10% of all adolescent pregnancies end in miscarriage or stillbirth compared to 7% among older women. Adolescent mothers also experience higher rates of neonatal mortality (70 8) among their infants they bear than are women aged 20-29 (44.8) (IIPS, 1995).

Despite the huge health risks associated with adolescent pregnancy, few studies have examined their obstetric morbidity patterns. What is available suggests that levels of anaemia and complications of pregnancy are considerably higher among adolescents than among older women (Ramachandran, 1989; Pachauri and Jamshedji, 1983). One community-based study of poor women in Andhra Pradesh found that adolescent weight gain during pregnancy was 2.7 kg compared to 4.8 kg among adult women; and birth weight was substantially lower among infants born to adolescent compared to adult women (Geervani and Jayashree, 1988). Another such study among tribal and overwhelmingly illiterate adolescents in Rajasthan observed moderate or severe anaemia among almost all (94%) of the pregnant adolescents; 85% weighed less than 42 kg; one in three suffered Vitamin A deficiency; and one in three of those in the third trimester showed high-risk signs (Sharma and Sharma, 1992) Despite these elevated risks, adolescents are no more likely than older women to obtain ante-natal care during pregnancy and trained attendance at delivery. About two in three adolescents and adult women obtained some ante-natal care; and about one in three were delivered by a trained attendant (IIPS, 1995).

While abortion has been legal in India since 1972, limited availability and poor quality have kept safe abortion beyond the reach of most poor women. An estimated five million abortions occur annually in India; of these, only half a million are performed under the health services network (UNICEF, 1991). Studies describing the abortion situation in India are limited, hospital-based and urban, and hence refer to only a small proportion of abortion-seekers. Information on adolescent abortion seekers is particularly limited. What is available gives a disturbing picture.

Induced abortion is somewhat more likely among adolescent than among older women: 1.7% and 1.3% of pregnancies, respectively (IIPS, 1995). Hospital based studies suggest that adolescents constitute a significant proportion of abortion seekers: 27% of all abortions conducted in the period 1976-87 in a rural setting (Chhabra et al., 1988); and 30% of those conducted in an urban hospital setting (Solapurkar and Sangam, 1985). Unmarried adolescents constitute a disproportionately large proportion of adolescent abortion seekers, in both rural (Chhabra et al., 1988) and urban hospital-based studies (Aras, and others, 1987; Solapurkar and Sangam, 1985; Purandare and Krishna, 1974).

Adolescents are considerably more likely than older women to delay seeking abortion services and undergo second trimester abortion. In Solapur, second trimester abortions were performed on 56% of adolescent abortion seekers, compared to 34% of older women. In Baroda (Bhatt, 1978) and Bombay (Purandare and Krishna, 1974), more than four in five adolescent abortion seekers (81% and 90% respectively) sought abortion in the second trimester of pregnancy. Unmarried adolescents are especially likely to delay abortion (Aras, and others, 1987; Divekar and others, 1979). Delays in seeking services were largely the result of lack of awareness of pregnancy, as well as ignorance of services, and fear of social stigmatisation.

Health consequence of abortion are acute: one in four adolescents who sought second trimester abortion suffered

2 Unfortunately, there are few data available on fertility rates among unmarried adolescents and this kind of statement relies more on observations made from hospital and clinic admissions as well as from admissions to 'remand' and other homes for unmarried mothers The situation of unmarried adolescent mothers is particularly bleak; families are unlikely to offer support and the few existing 'remand' homes for unwed mothers tend to be understaffed and offer little comfort, physical or emotional, to the woman and child (Watsa, 1991)

complications (compared to one per cent of those who underwent abortion in the first trimester, and 11% of all adolescents, Aras, and others, 1987, Bombay). Adolescent abortion seekers are especially vulnerable to repeat abortions, and few single adolescent women agreed to use contraception after abortion (Purandare and Krishna, 1974; Divekar and others, 1979; Mandal, 1982). A disturbing proportion of adolescent abortion seekers became pregnant as a result of rape or non-consensual sexual activity: as many as 20% of all pregnancies to adolescent abortion seekers occurred as a result of involuntary contacts with others, including relatives, and domestic servants (Mandal, 1982; Bhatt, 1978).

Adolescents are poorly informed about their own sexuality and physical well-being Whatever knowledge they have, moreover, is incomplete and confused. Low rates of educational attainment, limited sex education activities and inhibited attitudes towards sex attenuate this ignorance. A brief overview of this lack of awareness suggests: Adolescent girls are generally ignorant of menstruation until it occurs; even then, knowledge is limited to the mechanics of menstruation, and to related behavioural norms (that cooking or going too close to the idols of gods is not permitted), and not necessarily its links to sex and reproduction (Vlassoff, 1978; Bhende, 1995; Rasheed, and others, 1978). Boys, although interested, are not much more aware of physical changes than girls are (Bhende, 1994).

Knowledge of sex and reproduction are even more limited, both among college-going girls (Sharma and Sharma, 1996), and among younger girls and boys residing in an urban slum (Bhende, 1995; 1994); the retrospective statements of poor women corroborate, likewise, their ignorance, at the time of marriage, about what to expect (George and Jaswal, 1995).

Contraceptive awareness is equally vague, even among married adolescents. Awareness of non-terminal methods, that is, those that are suitable for young women, is limited among all groups – married (ORG, 1990) and unmarried females, as well as adolescent boys (Bhende, 1995; 1994). Accurate knowledge of methods is even more limited (ORG, 1990).

Awareness of sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS varies: from 95% and 66% of Bombay and Solapur college students, respectively (Chitale and Shankar Das, 1992), to 25% and 32% among poorer and younger adolescent girls and boys respectively (Bhende, 1995). But the modes of HIV transmission, and the role of condoms in safe sex were poorly understood by all, irrespective of age and educational status, but particularly poorly by females. Fewer than 5% of college students were aware that AIDS could be transmitted through infected blood; fewer than 11% mentioned that sexual relations with sex workers could be a mode of transmission; and as many as 13-19% thought AIDS was curable (Chitale and Shankar Das, 1992). Slum adolescents fare worse: only five respondents – all boys – suggested that relations with commercial sex workers could result in STDs and HIV infection. The role of condoms in preventing HIV was rarely recognised (Bhende, 1995; 1994, no girls and 6 of 125 boys).

Adolescent ignorance about sexual and reproductive behaviour is compounded by a reluctance among parents and teachers to impart relevant information. A common response among mothers is: 'There is no need to tell them anything' and 'How can the mother talk about such matters?' (Bhende, 1995; 1994). The educational system is also ambivalent about imparting sex education. Sex education activities are euphemistically referred to as 'adolescent' education, and are imparted as part of existing population education activities, not as a separate subject (Anand, 1993). Teachers find the topic embarrassing and avoid it (Vlassoff, 1978). Innovative and well-received exceptions have however begun to emerge, including a letterbox approach, in which questions, dropped anonymously, are answered in group sessions by a health educator (Sharma, 1996).

Attitudes towards marriage and sex among adolescents, and girls in particular, continue, by and large, to be conservative and accepting of traditional norms which oppose love marriages, social interaction between adolescent boys and girls and pre-marital sex.

Most adolescent girls continue to favour or expect marriage in adolescence (Bhende, 1995; Vlassoff, 1978, Patel, 1982), with later ages at marriage favoured largely by well-educated and working adolescents (Kumari, 1985). Arranged marriage continue to be overwhelmingly preferred by both adolescent girls (Kumari, 1985; Bhende, 1995), and their parents (Mahale, 1987). In contrast, boys actually favoured love marriages (Bhende, 1995). The double standards existing in gender relations are reflected in expectations of marriage among both boys and girls. While girls wished for a husband with a steady income, a good provider and one who was not a heavy drinker, high on the list of expectations of adolescent boys were obedience, followed by good homemaking skills and good looks (Bhende, 1995).

Disapproval of pre-marital sexual activity is widespread, especially among girls. A study of 17,185 adolescents aged 14-17 (95% unmarried) from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi (Family Planning Foundation of India 1991) reports that as many as 87% of females and 72% of males disapproved of premarital sex. In contrast, a recent survey of older – and presumably more experienced – young people (aged up to 24) in 16 cities the 1993 survey suggests lesser disapproval: 63% of all females and 38% of all males (Watsa, 1993). Again, double standards regarding female virginity continue to be held: about half of both men and women stress that it is imperative that a female is a virgin at marriage (Watsa, 1993; Sridhar and Savara, 1992).

The patriarchal family in India is typically age and gender stratified. Within it, young and newly married women are particularly powerless, secluded and voiceless. Thus, adolescent women have little choice about whom and when to

marry, whether or not to have sexual relations and when to bear children. On the contrary, there are strong pressures on the young bride to prove her fertility – preferably by producing a son – as soon as possible after marriage, in order to establish her position in terms of social acceptance and economic security in her marital home. Infertility is deeply feared – a childless woman stands the risk of abuse, abandonment or the presence of a second wife. Nor is there much communication or intimacy between a young woman and her husband. Contraceptive and family size decisions do not necessarily involve the young wife. Adolescent girls in pre-marital relationships are equally unlikely to make contraceptive decisions: 40% of abortion-seekers in one study reported that contraceptive decision making was left to the male, a large proportion of whom remained apathetic (Mandal, 1982)

Few services cater to adolescents in India, a limitation that has even been recognised by the Indian government (Ministry of Welfare, Department of Women and Child Development, 1990). For example, anaemia, rampant among adolescent girls, is unaddressed by the health service network until pregnancy (Srikantia, 1989). While non-formal education schemes exist, they not only enrol a relatively small proportion of the large number of out-of-school adolescent girls, but also impart a limited curriculum that rarely touches issues of sexuality and reproductive health. School-going adolescents have access to school health services but may fare only slightly better in getting their reproductive health service or information needs addressed. As a result, adolescent boys in particular remain vulnerable to 'sex specialists', who exploit their concerns and misconceptions about sex (Watsa, 1987).

While a formal population education programme exists, in theory, in schools, colleges, universities and vocational training institutions as well as in non-formal and adult education programmes, there is a glaring lack of responsiveness to the sexual information needs of young people in the official programme in practice. NGOs have tried to fill this gap, through family life education and sex education activities for both in- and out-of-school youth, but their efforts are hardly adequate given the size and cultural diversity of the country, and the magnitude of information needs.

What has become clear from this review, despite the fact that adolescents represent a fifth of the population, is that little information is available, and that adolescents are rarely considered a distinct group with special needs apart from those of children and adults. Moreover, much of the available information is recent, and exploratory.

Some findings are, nonetheless, well established. Adolescent marriage and adolescent fertility rates are disturbingly high. As a result of early marriage, about half of all young women are sexually active by the time they are 18; and almost one in five by the time they are 15. Correspondingly, the magnitude of teenage fertility, occurring overwhelmingly within the context of marriage, is considerable: well over half of all women aged 15-19 have experienced a pregnancy. While information on other aspects of adolescent reproductive health is sparse, what is available suggests that adolescents face a variety of reproductive health problems beyond early marriage and fertility. What is available also points to enormous methodological difficulties in conducting research among adolescents.

Adolescent sexual behaviour, awareness and attitudes remain poorly explored topics, and available findings are not entirely representative. What is available suggests that between 20 and 30% of all males and up to 10% of all females are sexually active during adolescence before marriage. Sexual awareness seems to be largely superficial. Social attitudes favour cultural norms of premarital chastity. Double standards exist whereby unmarried adolescent boys are far more likely than adolescent girls to be sexually active. They are also more likely to approve of premarital sexual relations for themselves and have more opportunities to engage in sexual relations. Both unmarried and married women are vulnerable to unwanted pregnancy; both females and males to sexually transmitted infection. Girls also are unlikely to have decision-making power in their sexual relationships.

Despite the paucity of reliable information, several programme recommendations stand out from this review.

Intensify efforts to postpone early marriage among adolescent girls. It is important to raise awareness among girls, their parents, schools, and communities of the harmful health consequences of early pregnancy, and other consequences for girls' lives, such as their subordinate status; and of legislation prohibiting marriage for girls under 18. Equally important are efforts to hold government accountable for upholding such legislation.

Address negative health implications of the lack of autonomy of married adolescent girls. Service providers must be trained to address the special needs of married adolescent girls in ways that are sensitive to the adolescent and recognise their powerlessness within their husbands' families. The information and counselling needs of adolescents, for example, are more acute and varied than those of adult women, and need to be recognised and delivered appropriately Equally, service providers must treat pregnant adolescents as a high risk group, and closely monitor their pregnancies. Also important, due to the low decision-making autonomy of adolescent girls in their husbands' families, are efforts to raise awareness of more powerful family decision-makers, including husbands and mothers-in-laws.

Address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls. Gender disparities in feeding patterns are a reality in India; anaemia is widespread among females and takes its toll on the growth of adolescent girls, and on the risks they suffer in pregnancy. Appropriate interventions must be sought, therefore, that provide iron supplementation to all poor adolescent girls, irrespective of pregnancy status.

Provide more education to adolescents on anatomy and physiology. Adolescent girls and boys need more educating on changes in puberty, menstruation, conception, infections, contraception and protection from sexually transmitted diseases, and sexuality. Innovative ways of providing this information in a non-threatening environment that allows adolescents to raise their own concerns need to be replicated at the school and community levels. Equally important, innovative ways of overcoming adult resistance to education on these sensitive topics need to be developed.

Respond more sensitively to special needs of unmarried adolescent girls and boys. Broadly speaking, existing reproductive health and information services need to respond more sensitively, and in less judgmental ways, to the needs of unmarried adolescents. Privacy and confidentiality must be ensured in this culture in which adolescent sexual activity outside of marriage is considered unacceptable, especially for girls.

The gaps in understanding about adolescent reproductive health are formidable. This review suggests that far more community-based, and behavioural, research is needed in the following areas.

Investigate reproductive health needs and decision-making authority among married adolescent girls. What are the constraints married adolescent women face in accessing information and services, and in influencing decisions about fertility, contraception, morbidity and sexual relations? How does their limited autonomy condition the practice of enduring obstetric and gynaecological morbidity and widespread domestic violence as a fact of life, and hesitation about revealing these conditions to health providers? What are the circumstances under which adolescent girls may be able to exercise greater autonomy in these matters?

Investigate pre-marital sexual behaviour, awareness and attitudes among more representative samples of adolescent girls and boys. Research that is both more representative and in-depth is required, to assesses levels and patterns of sexual activity, perceptions of sexual relations and sexual responsibility among adolescent females and males, awareness of sexual behaviour, reproduction and ways of preventing pregnancy and disease, and the array of social and cultural constraints adolescents face in addressing sexual issues or acquiring appropriate information and services

Describe the levels, patterns and context of abortion behaviour among both unmarried and married adolescent girls, and awareness of its legal status. Abortion is a significant problem among adolescent girls. They frequently seek abortion later than adult women, and experience higher rates of complications. Despite the serious implications of these findings, the topic of adolescent abortion has hardly been studied.

Conduct community-based studies on obstetric and gynaecological morbidity among adolescent girls, and sexually transmitted infections among boys and girls. While limited, evidence suggests that adolescent girls are especially vulnerable to complications of pregnancy and childbirth, that such gynaecological morbidities as excessive discharge are not unknown among them, and that a growing proportion of adolescents, boys in particular, seek treatment of sexually transmitted infections Community-based studies are needed that reveal patterns of obstetric, and gynaecological morbidity among adolescent girls and sexually transmitted morbidity among girls and boys, and their socio-economic and behavioural correlates.

Investigate adolescents' access to health care, and the constraints they face in acquiring good health. Little is known about adolescent utilisation of reproductive health services and the constraints, both socio-cultural and programme-related, adolescents face in acquiring services. What is available suggests that few opportunities in fact exist which cater to their special health, information and counselling needs. The few educational or counselling facilities that exist are only based in large urban areas. Moreover, the culture of silence surrounding sexual and reproductive health issues, along with widespread seclusion of young women, makes adolescent girls particularly unlikely to seek or obtain reproductive health information or care, including ante-natal and delivery services

Use rigorous, in-depth, and at the same time, sensitive and culturally appropriate research designs to elicit data about adolescents. There are several limitations in existing research designs and methodology that need to be overcome. First, samples of study populations need to be representative of populations from which they are drawn, and randomness must be ensured. Second, given the sensitive nature of topics relating to adolescent sexuality, and the lack of sound precedents, greater reliance on qualitative methods is warranted, either on their own, or in order to provide supplementary and more in-depth insights to quantitative findings Third, questions need to be sensitively and imaginatively framed, designed to allow for as much in-depth insight and sensitive probing as possible. Finally, whatever the methodology, there is a need to go beyond simple descriptions of data, to more rigorous analysis of behavioural relationships, and the socio-cultural correlates of adolescent reproductive health.

In conclusion, this review has highlighted the glaring lack of information on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents. Far more behavioural research is needed that explores why adolescents' sexual and reproductive health service and information needs remain unmet and how health and information services can be structured to respond to these needs, taking into consideration the social, cultural and economic constraints that adolescents face.

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Goals and modalities of research

LEELA VISARIA

EVEN prior to the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in September 1994, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), women's groups, activists and academics had voiced concern about distortions resulting from the method-specific targets introduced in the Indian family planning programme in the late 1960s and gradually extended to the grassroots level.

The targets were introduced to monitor the efforts of individual health workers (then called the auxiliary nurse mid-wives or ANMs) to lower the rate of population growth and eventually progress towards population stabilization. However, despite the best intentions of the planners, the goal of improving the services related to women's health in general and reproductive health in particular, articulated in the 1950s, was being assigned a lower priority, resulting in continued unnecessary suffering among nearly half the population of India.

The dissenting groups had initiated a dialogue and discussion among themselves to press the government for removing method-specific targets and focusing on the quality of services offered by the programme and the associated basic issues; but these efforts never gathered momentum. The academic research on health status and morbidity patterns among women was too scanty to provide an adequate data base to understand and focus on the issues of the status of reproductive health of Indian women. The activists failed to make an impact on the policy-makers because of the diffused nature of their articulation of the issue; they generally viewed women's health in a global perspective or in the context of liberalization policies and the structural adjustment and had little to offer by way of concrete prescriptions or specific policy recommendations to alleviate the suffering of millions of women.

Also, the NGOs which provided reproductive health services along with general health care to the community generally did not document their efforts in a systematic manner. Apart from the findings of a pioneering community-based study undertaken in two tribal villages of Maharashtra by an NGO and a few recent studies undertaken in small pockets in the states of Gujarat, West Bengal and Maharashtra (also by NGOs), not much is known about the reproductive health of Indian women at the national level. While the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) provided some estimates of the extent of infertility or childlessness, its psychological and social consequences for women, the unfulfilled health needs of women and their health-seeking behaviour are under-researched issues.

The few studies undertaken so far are not always in the public domain, and they often lack rigour in data collection and analysis Also, the studies tend to follow the specific data and research needs of the concerned NGOs; consequently, the methodologies vary substantially and the findings based on the data sets of different organizations are not always comparable or additive

An important problem in research on women's health is the need for a multi-disciplinary approach and team-work by social scientists from diverse disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology in addition to health sciences. The self-reporting of reproductive morbidity by women is likely to involve an under-reporting of their suffering or complaints because women rarely discuss them openly even with their own kith and kin. Moreover, some asymptomatic ail-

ments are likely to go unreported because women are themselves unaware of them. Therefore, to obtain a reasonably correct estimate of the incidence or prevalence of different types of morbidity in a community, a validation through medical examination is essential. But it raises a real methodological issue which emanates when different disciplines are brought together. If the incidence and pattern of self-reported morbidity differ from those detected through clinical examination or laboratory results, how do analysts of data reconcile or resolve the differences?

These methodological issues, however, do not reduce the importance of more research and should not deter anyone from conducting research on the reproductive health of Indian women. The ordeals of women begin before the onset of menstruation and continue beyond menopause The number of pregnancies and deliveries or abortions determine to a considerable extent the wear and tear to which their bodies are subjected and the burden of known and unknown disabilities or ailments that they have to bear. The factors that influence their responses to the efforts of health workers to persuade them to accept the reversible or permanent methods of contraception, and thereby limit the timing and/or the magnitude of the drudgery of child-bearing and rearing, are not adequately understood and are an important theme for detailed studies.

Equally important is study and documentation of the support and care available to them from the male-dominated social environment, often haunted by an acute resource scarcity, for healthy functioning as human beings with varied basic needs. However, a few caveats are in order to avoid the possible frustration in research on these and similar themes.

Any inquiry on reproductive health issues such as gynecological morbidity among women raises some ethical considerations. When women report serious reproductive tract infections during a survey, what does a researcher do? She or he cannot simply record the problems reported and proceed with the analysis of data. A modicum of effort to provide some treatment or, in its absence, referral or advice, help to establish referral contacts, and paying for the transportation cost, should be regarded as essential components of such research. It may thereby become action-research with some elements of operations research rather than pure academic research. But sensitive issues cannot be researched by ignoring the human dimension or without programmatic improvements. The high cost of such endeavours can be moderated by involving a team of public-spirited empathetic gynecologists in the research activities.

Any effort to research in as sensitive an area as reproductive health, requires careful planning, training of investigators not only in research methodology but in dealing with respondents with empathy and patience. The investigators should also be prepared and willing to visit the respondents more than once. Painstaking efforts to build up good rapport with the study population are absolutely essential; but even after the rapport is established, many disappointments cannot ordinarily be avoided because of the very nature and compulsions of the Indian social setting.

In addition to collecting new data, we also need to explore and analyse the existing data sets on many issues. While one fully recognises the limitations of hospital-based data on abortion or maternal mortality, for example, these records need to be closely scrutinized to understand their determinants and the circumstances which lead to these events. The exploration of these data sets may also lead to valuable suggestions for improving the collection of data itself An attempt can be made to experiment with case control studies to identify the correlates and high risk factors.

We do not know enough about the health seeking behaviour of women with regard to reproductive tract infections or sexually transmitted diseases, abortion services, chronic discomforts or morbidity experienced following or due to the acceptance of terminal or spacing methods of family planning. This is an area where social scientists and activists with empathy can enhance our understanding of when, where and what health care women seek for themselves and the associated constraints.

A multi-centric study with a common research design, sampling, questionnaire or data analysis may be quite difficult. However, to enhance our understanding of the load of morbidity (which, by all accounts, is very high), in-depth small-scale research in diverse settings must be launched to find alternative ways to lessen the silent suffering among women It can focus on suggesting ways and means to make public health functionaries responsive to the needs of women and ideally to make males recognise their vital role in ensuring the reproductive health of female members of the family.

Our knowledge of sexual and reproductive health of men is also extremely limited. In addition, we need to understand the intra-household power dynamics, the approach and outlook of male members on the subject, the nature of relationship between men and women as sexual partners and their perceptions on sexuality. These issues are critical to understand whether and how far men care for their partners and how that affects women's self-esteem as well as health seeking behaviour. Carefully planned research will enable us to understand the role and involvement of men.

It is important to ensure that without sacrificing the rigour required for good research, we limit the usual preoccupation of Indian researchers with statistical refinements and try to minimize the more serious non-sampling errors. If the goal of improving the reproductive health of the Indian people is achieved and we can alleviate the unnecessary suffering of millions of women, men and adolescents of our country, it will raise the productivity and the well-being of the Indian people. A sizable expenditure of time, effort and resources on action research for this purpose will prove a most effective investment for improving the living conditions of the people.

Understanding sexuality

ANNIE GEORGE

THE existence of HIV/AIDS in the Indian population is no longer denied; instead India is predicted to have the largest number of persons with HIV/AIDS by the first decade of the next century. Sexual intercourse, mainly through sex between men and women but also through sex between men, is the predominant mode of transmission. As yet, there is no vaccine or cure for HIV/AIDS and the primary preventive measure is modification of sexual behaviours. One response to this situation by government and non-governmental agencies has been the support of research on sexual behaviours

Modification of sexual behaviour requires a deep understanding of how and why people behave the way they do. Only then can feasible and specific interventions be designed for demographically, culturally and socially diverse groups. However, obtaining accurate information about a sensitive, private and personal experience is a strong challenge and lies in two areas. One, the definition of the problem or phenomenon being studied and two, the methodological issues in getting valid and reliable data.

The focus of several current studies is on sexual behaviour and sexual attitudes, thus defining these as 'the problem', the issue to be understood and then changed. For instance, studies of the sexual behaviour of truck drivers, men who have sex with men, college students, and so on, (see Nag, 1996 for details) have offered a number of insights on the incidence and attitude towards premarital and extra-marital sex, the incidence of multi-partner sex among truck drivers, and barriers to the use of condoms among various groups like female sex workers, truck drivers, and even people in the medical profession like physicians and nurses do not have the 'correct' information about the prevention of HIV/AIDS. They have, however, been of limited use in the task of developing interventions to prevent the transmission of HIV, primarily because much of the existing information about sexual behaviour has been gathered through quantitative survey methods and from a bio-medical perspective.

While surveys and other means of gathering easily quantifiable data provide useful information on the prevalence of attitudes and practices of interest, they could reduce a complex social process to one dimension, namely coitus. They do not capture the richness of human sexual experience nor consider the social, economic and symbolic dimensions of human sexuality. The use of quantifiable data increases the tendency to count acts rather than to explore the meanings of such acts. Most quantitative surveys of sexual behaviour offer limited insight into

the complex range of social and cultural meanings associated with behaviours and ways in which behaviour itself is shaped by such meanings in various cultural and social settings (Parker, 1994).

Sexual behaviour research has received fresh impetus, however, mainly because of the concern for preventing, or limiting, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Funds are often time-bound and solution oriented, and rightly so, stressing on the need for recommendations and possible interventions. The availability of large amounts of funding, greater international visibility and legitimacy for sexual behaviour research and improved career opportunities has begun to attract people to this area although researchers are still ambivalent about staking their careers on this topic. The focus of disease prevention is reflected in the large presence of bio-medical personnel from medical colleges and health related non-governmental organizations as key actors in sexual behaviour research.

Departments of demography and schools of social work are the other key actors, probably as reflection of their involvement in areas related to sexual behaviour: prevention and cure of sexually transmitted diseases, provision of birth control measures, and counselling people with sexual and reproductive health problems. The limited involvement of social scientists, and departments of sociology and anthropology in the study of sexuality and sexual behaviour has resulted in sexuality research which has a bio-medical and demographic perspective. Research on sexuality and sexual behaviour is further disadvantaged as a tradition of research in these areas is poorly developed This is reflected in a shortage of trained researchers and a paucity of continuing and cumulative research and data base in this field. As a result, even in a survey-based approach to the study of sexual behaviour, there is no collection of reliable and valid research techniques and instruments, no tried and tested methods of sampling, no wisdom in the recruitment of respondents. We have to depend on the experience of other disciplines like demography, but the experiences may not be directly transferable.

The influence of the bio-medical and epidemiological survey perspective is reflected in the language and terminology used by researchers When sexual behaviour research is conducted from the perspective of disease prevention and improving sexual health, categories of interest like 'sex act', and 'risk', tend to reflect a medical view of such concepts. In practice, researchers are guided by a bio-medical perspective to 'translate' these categories into the local language during the data gathering process. Respondents, on the other hand, are more comfortable with the popular or folk language of sexuality, as found in informal or vulgar speech, sexual jokes and slang.

When researchers and respondents do not share a common language and vocabulary, the validity of the data gathered through the use of poorly defined and unclear language is questionable. Aggleton (1996) has argued that the reliability and validity of data from population-based surveys is questionable because of ambiguities in the use of specific sexual terminology, varying meanings attached to the same sex act, and ambiguities in framing questions. Furthermore, the back and forth translation of difficult concepts can also change the meaning of the concept.

Another danger of sexuality and sexual behaviour being commanded by a bio-medical and survey perspective is that the sexual ideology of privileged class and caste groups gets reinforced and legitimated through the process of research and because of the high status accorded to practitioners and disciplines of medicine and quantitative techniques. Heterosexuality and monogamy are the moral values held by these researchers. It is common, for instance, to hear or see researchers use phrases like 'indulging in sex' and 'promiscuous sex'. The danger is that research and health promotion are used to propagate dominant values; uncommon behaviours, and people practising it are in danger of being derogated.

Knowledge gained through sexual behaviour surveys has limited use in designing feasible and specific interventions for specific groups. It is increasingly apparent that sexual behaviours and attitudes are constituted within complex political, social, economic and cultural contexts, and that sexuality continues to evolve historically in response to these. Sexuality is now understood as a complex social construct which has different meanings within different communities and societies, and one which has diverse expres-sions within and across age, gender and social class. To comprehend this complex and expanded definition of the issues to be studied, symbolic interactionism or social constructionism is being used as a theory to guide research on sexuality. The main insight of social construction is that meanings are attached to bodies and acts rather than inherently residing there The social construction approach advocates making as few assumptions as possible about sexual behaviour and sexuality and thus asking a very wide range of questions on areas like sexual meanings, identities and cultures.

The recent focus of social science research on sexuality emphasizes the social construction of sexual life, human sexuality less as the product of biology than of the social and cultural systems which shape sexual experiences and the ways in which these experiences are understood and interpreted. This perspective of sexuality and sexual behaviour, as socially constructed, focuses attention on the collective quality of sexuality, not as the characteristic of individuals but of social persons living within the context of diverse sexual cultures. From the symbolic interactionist framework, sexual behaviour is seen as shaped within socially and culturally structured inter actions. The focus, then, is on understanding the context and process of sexual interactions which are shaped, for instance, by kinship structures, systems of marriage, and ideologies about gender and sexuality. Each of these systems structure sexual relations differently, and the differences are compounded when it

involves people of different status and with unequal capacities to negotiate for safer sex. These processes and sexual interactions, therefore have grave and differing consequences for the vulnerability of different groups to HIV.

The emphasis on the social organization of sexual interactions, the contexts in which sexual practices occur and on the complex relations between meaning and power in the constitution of sexual experience has led to a focus on the investigation of diverse sexual cultures. Research is shifting from sexual behaviour itself to the culture settings in which it is taking place, and to the cultural rules which organize it. Examples of such research in India are the nascent studies on sexuality among college going youth, and on the different homosexual communities These efforts have reinforced the trend to move from what anthropologists call an 'outsider' or 'expert' perspective to understanding the concepts, language and categories used by members of specific cultures to understand and interpret their own reality.

The urgency and importance of understanding local 'insider perspective' on sexual behaviours and sexuality is highlighted in the study of sexual identity. Research reports and anecdotal information from service providers appear to indicate that the link between sexual behaviour and sexual identity is tenuous at best. For instance, studies in India have shown that several communities of men practise homosexual sex in particular contexts while they may not identify themselves as homosexuals (see Nag, 1996). Similarly, particular groups of women, for instance women outside the pale of marriage – widows, deserted and divorced women – may provide sexual services in exchange for gifts, favours or money. These women may not regard themselves as sex workers, nor be seen as such by health and other service providers who may focus their HIV prevention services to women who are socially organized as sex workers.

The point to note is that the boundaries of these categories are expanding and changing, and an 'insider perspective' is needed to gain a fuller understanding of these processes. While much of the early Indian understanding of HIV/AIDS saw sex workers as the 'reservoirs of infection', more detailed studies show that the relations of sexual and economic exchange are far more complex and varied than originally assumed. In many contexts, the exchange of sexual services for gifts, favours, and money is not an uncommon part of the sexual behaviour of women whose primary identity is not that of sex workers. In other situations such exchange may be specifically organized around a distinct and shared identity of sex work. What is being realized is that all people go through a process of sexual socialization by which they learn the sexual desires, feelings, roles and practices typical of people in their context. Studies are under way on the formation of the sexual identities of young college going youth.

The social construction of sexual identities has led to an awareness of particular groups, or sexual communities, wherein sexual relations are socially permitted, and to research, for instance, in the emergent gay community in India. But more generally, research is also focused on the ways in which specific communities structure the possibility of sexual interactions. Social rules regulate the contexts, circumstances and persons with whom one can have a sexual relationship.

These social rules also place specific constraints on the potential for negotiation of sexual interactions between people of unequal social status like husband and wife or client and sex worker. Such constraints, or social rules, condition the possibility for sexual communication, sexual coercion, sexual pleasure, and the use of sexual risk reduction strategies. Research has begun to focus on and the place of socially and culturally sanctioned differentials in power between men and women. The dynamics of gender-power relations have thus emerged as a major focus for research, particularly in relation to reproductive health and to the spread of HIV infection among women (Mane, Gupta and Weiss, 1994).

The expanded scope of sexuality research and the kinds of questions to which answers are sought requires a wide range of research methods. Quantitative surveys continue to be an important method of obtaining information. In addition, qualitative research methods like in-depth, open-ended interviews, focus group discussions, and ethnographic observations are being used to study the multi-faceted dimensions of sexuality. Qualitative studies have offered information on areas like household and community responses to HIV, gender power differentials between married couples and their sexual risk-taking, the development of a sexual identity among college students, and so on. These studies focus their analysis on the contextualized interpretation of the meanings of sexuality for the population groups studied

Getting believable (read valid) information about sexual life depends on the interviewer's skill and a key element is the ability to build a relationship of trust with the respondent which is consonant with the respondent's subjective perception of the nature of the relationship. Interviewers have to be aware of and cope with factors like social and cultural status issues, cultural beliefs, age, gender, and the respondent's subjective assessment of the interviewer's attitudes and interest in the interview process. The subjective dimension of trust makes it difficult to know exactly what helps build enough of it to get responses of veracity and profoundness.

Working with local interviewers can be useful at times but it can also constitute an obstacle in collecting information on sensitive issues, particularly if the interviewer is of the same local community, caste group, or has a social relationship with the respondent like being a neighbour, blood relation or related by marriage. Respondents' perceptions about the interviewers' personal characteristics like gender, age, social status, and concerns about maintaining the honour,

the *izzat*, of the partner and the family may affect the nature of the answers received. Matching researchers and respondents by gender and age is generally practised, but this may not always get 'truthful' answers For instance, male respondents may report higher numbers of sexual partners to male interviewers. The social environment of the interview and the method of data collection, whether interview, group discussion or observation, all affect the interviewer-interviewee relationship in subjective ways and hence the nature of the data collected.

Researchers have also to balance their methodological concerns with that of ethical issues: the need for confidentiality, informed consent and the balance between risks and benefits. All these are particularly difficult to achieve in contexts where networks of researchers are small and highly personalized, where getting truly informed consent is easily violated when working with people who may lack understanding of their rights as subjects of research

In conclusion, HIV/AIDS has challenged and expanded our conception of sexuality and has mandated a rethinking of research agendas. Moreover, it has shown that the established methods of bio-medical, epidemiological and social science research have to be modified and expanded to include all research methods which enable us to have a more complete understanding of the socio-cultural contexts, and meanings of sexuality and sexual (risk) behaviours.

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Voices from the field

SHREE VENKATRAM

SHE is called the backbone of the Family Welfare Programme and in effect, is the only link that a majority of Indians have to a medical system that can save the lives of their children, help them combat common illnesses and tell them of ways to control the size of their families. Medical circles may call her the ANM, the auxiliary nurse and midwife: but to millions of common villagers, she is *didi* or *behenji*.

She was a vital link in the family planning programme and one reason behind the failure of the programme was that the ANM was not given the importance or facilities she needed. In the new target-free set-up, her role assumes greater importance for she can make or mar its implementation. It is imperative, therefore, to listen to her.

Indira Nair, now in her thirties, has been working as an ANM in Uttar Pradesh for the last 13 years. Like several ANMs in U.P., she comes from Kerala and is the epitome of courage. Several single women like her, have made a U.P. village or small town their home, learning the language and dealing with a culturally different set of people. In fact, it is women like Indira, who do not belong to the state and are far removed from the local power group structure, who bring a sense of dedication to their work.

Ask Indira what a change in paradigm has meant for her and she says: 'Nothing much, really. I had to work then; I have to work now. They say there is no *danda* now and if I cannot meet targets it is all right. But they have asked us for

figures – how many pills I will distribute, how many IUDs I will fit, how many operation cases I will bring. The difference is that earlier the figures for specific methods were decided for me but now I decide them in consultation with my seniors and am expected to stick by them.'

A contradiction surfaces almost each time one talks to an ANM They have been told that targets have been removed, but are still expected to fix their own targets or goals. They do not know what will happen if they fail to meet their commitments.

But Indira is emphatic about how the situation can improve. 'Give us properly equipped clinics, proper facilities and see the result. Our status in the eyes of the people will improve and they will respect us and listen to us. We will have facilities and equipment to tend to them. Often when they ask me for medicine for common ailments, I have nothing to give them.'

The sub-centres and primary health centres are in a pathetic shape. Most are housed in ramshackle one-roomed structures, little better than a cowshed! For the last six years, Indira has been living in the sub-centre itself at Unnao – in one room of the *pradhan's* house. As there is no space for her children to stay, even if they were to visit her, she goes every weekend to meet her family in Lucknow. This means she is unavailable for any deliveries that may take place or complications that may arise.

'There is no proper school in Unnao and so my children can't stay with me,' she says. Her husband holds a government job and Indira has spent the last six years petitioning the government to shift her as the state government service rules provide that a husband and wife should be posted at the same place. But so far there has been no action on her petition.

A common charge levelled against ANMs is that they do not stay at the village sub-centre, preferring to stay in towns. This results in their having to travel long distances, often being available to the villagers only after half the day is over. Long commuting hours also affect their efficiency.

Nirmala Sharma, another ANM, lives in Agra and travels about 17 km on most days Some of the villages under her care are as far away as 40 km. 'If I stay at the sub-centre, where will my children study?' she asks. She agrees that she is tired by the time she starts attending to the patients. 'I have to walk long distances and no tempo or cart stops to give me a ride. The bus drops me on the road and then there are usually three to four kilometres to trudge on foot.'

The ice-box containing the vaccines and other medical equipment that an ANM carries on her visits weighs over 10 kg. 'Walking with that kind of load is very tiring,' Indira says. She adds that ANMs would function better if supplies were sent to the sub-centre or if the ANM was provided with a porter.

Lack of mobility hampers many ANMs from covering all the areas under their jurisdiction. Nirmala says she drags her husband with her when she has to visit remote villages for he can take her on his motorcycle. But this means that he has to take time off from work. She also cites harassment by *goondas* and village men. 'If they were to do something to me, no one will come to know. The villages are so cut off and the villagers have no respect for us. The *mukhias* and the local *dadas* expect us to be at their beck and call. One ANM was called to the mukhia's house for a family celebration and expected to clean the house and cook for the guests. If we refuse, we are endlessly harassed.'

Properly equipped centres which can be locked would mean that adequate medical supplies could be kept ready. Indira's sub-centre has no examination table or weighing machine. 'I cannot keep any supplies for there is no door,' she adds. Recounting a regional health camp held by Sahyog and Health Watch in Nainital recently, a doctor recalled how horrified he was to find that ANMs did not store vaccines properly; one of them actually carried a vaccine in a handkerchief!

The ANMs have come in for a lot of criticism 'They only do the rounds of their village when they have to meet heir sterilisation targets'; they are 'not dedicated'; they 'do not stay at the sub-centre'; 'many can't even fill up the register' and they 'fudge figures' – are common accusations. According to Haider, who works with them through the Population Council's office in Agra, only 50% have passed class 8 and one has to work hard to make them understand how to maintain a register, the basic tool for proper follow-up and health service.

The fact is that the ANM's work situation needs to be made a little less taxing and more secure for her to function properly. The villagers have to be told that her safety is their responsibility and she is there to look after their health. In case of any harassment, no ANM will be willing to work in their midst and tend to their children and women.

M.P. Sujata is another ANM from Kerala. She lives and works at the Akola sub-centre, on the outskirts of Agra. She says the new approach means that ANMs have to work hard the whole year through and not just at the end of the year, as was the practice under the old order. They have to maintain an elaborate register, devised with the help of the Population Council. This helps them keep track of the eligible couples and assess their needs.

Sujata also feels that centres should be properly equipped. In fact, the Primary Health Centre at Akola is in a deplorable state. A musty smell and an air of neglect is all-pervasive. The furniture is broken-down and there are no attractive posters to highlight health messages. The centre lacks privacy, forcing women to talk about their intimate health problems in embarrassing circumstances. It has two beds which are in a shockingly dirty state and the room is used more as a dump than a health centre. Yet people still come!

The ANMs feel that their workload is greater than that of the male health workers. The men merely handle malaria and epidemic control work. 'They make a few malaria slides in a day and that is all. We have to do all the work pertaining to immunisation, contraception, even condom distribution,' they say. 'At least condom distribution should be handled by male workers. Men make fun or pass lewd

jokes whenever we approach them,' says Indira. She distributes condoms to women and hopes they can convince their men to use them. Often she finds children playing with them, using them as balloons. But if the male workers motivated the men and handled distribution of condoms, their work would be more equitable and effective and men would be responsible for the size of their families.

Another problem ANMs are concerned about is the outcome an unsuccessful operation 'It shakes the people's faith in us,' they say. Indira recounts a recent case of a woman who she motivated to undergo a tubectomy. 'A few weeks later the woman told me she had missed her periods. As this was soon after the operation, I told her not to worry. She then went to her mother's place and returned after a few months. When I checked her and felt that she was pregnant, I took her to the doctor who had operated on her at the block hospital who confirmed that she was four months pregnant – too late for an abortion. The woman kept repeating that it was on my advice that she had undergone an operation. Her husband started harassing me, saying that they did not want the child and I had better do something. I felt responsible, so I had to take her all the way to Lucknow to a private doctor who agreed to abort her. This was one of the two cases of tubectomy from a particular village in my area I was able to manage after two years of work. But the failure had such a drastic effect that I have been told by the villagers that no one from their village will ever undergo an operation again.

'A failed operation makes our work extremely difficult and puts us in a very embarrassing position. Then we have to run around and spend money from our own pocket to organise the abortions,' she states.

Inadequate supply of contraceptives is another major problem. Oral pills, IUDs and condoms often run out. Indira says she has been working with the same IUD kit for the past six years. 'These should be replaced periodically. And we should also have regular basic medicines to dispense to the ill,' she says. 'People think we only approach them when we want them to undergo sterilisation and don't bother otherwise.'

Rakkumari, in her early twenties, beams as she holds a month old baby in her arms. She has come dressed in a colourful sari and a glittering *bindi* to the Akola centre, exuding an aura of happiness in that morose and sickly crowd. It doesn't take long to discover the cause of her happiness. she has finally become the mother of a son after three daughters. She has come for an IUD fitting as Sujata has managed to convince her that it is in her and her baby's best interest that she takes precautions not to conceive for the next few years.

But Rakkumari will have a fifth child. She comes from a Jat family where two sons are a 'basic necessity', she says. Her in-laws, husband and she, too, want one more son 'Among Jats they say if you do not have sons, who will fight for you and come to your help?' she says when asked why she is keen on having more children

Sujata has been able to persuade her to use the IUD because of the rapport she has set up with her. She has been the midwife at all her deliveries and is sure that Rakkumari will try for a second son, never mind if she has more daughters in the bargain.

The effect of repeated pregnancies and childbirth on her health is a common enough story in India Sujata's success lies in the fact that she has been able to get her to adopt a spacing measure To reverse an Indian family's aspiration for a son will take many more years and Sujata will need the backing of the entire government communications machinery, policies that result in a woman's economic well-being and improved health care facilities before society stops hankering for a male child Till then women like Rakkumari have no say over their bodies and reproductive decisions.

Indira gives an inkling of how difficult her job is when she says, 'We have to tackle the mother-in-law first. In all my years in the village, a woman will never do something that will earn her mother-in-law's disapproval. She listens to her faithfully. After all she wants to stay on in the house. If she is kicked out where will she go?' So in her effort to get women to accept spacing and contraceptive measures she works on the mother-in-law first. Rakkumari says her mother-in-law agreed as the family is keen to ensure that the precious baby boy remains healthy.

Rohini is 37 and the mother of six children. She lives with her husband in a resettlement colony of Dakshinpuri. Actually she has conceived nine times since she was married at 15. She underwent a tubectomy seven years ago and is happy that she will never again be pregnant. She was motivated to go in for an operation when she visited the health centre for an abortion. In turn, she has convinced many women in her area to go in for sterilisation. She says the women in her colony are aware of tubectomy but do not know much about other methods of birth control, apart from the pill. They have seen the TV advertisement about the pill but feel, 'Who can be bothered remembering to take the pill everyday. The operation is better. Pain for a little while and then *chutti*. The women now do not even wait for their husbands' approval. Usually, after three or four children they decide they have had enough. But that is because they live in Delhi and things are different here. Women know what vaccines their children need. They visit the health centre and get their children immunised,' she points out.

'But it is different in villages,' she adds. 'No one can tell them to limit their children. They will skin you alive.'

'We earn and look after our children. What is it to you? Mind your own business,' is what they say In fact that is what my sister-in-law and brother who live near Saharanpur told me when I advised my sister-in-law to undergo the operation after four children. I told her life would become easier for her. But she just won't listen.'

Attitudes, unlike the times, it seems, are not changing fast enough.

Sexual violence within marriage

M E KHAN, JOHN W TOWNSEND,
RANJANA SINHA and SEEMA LAKHANPAL

TILL recently the study of sexual behaviour was an untouchable subject. The sensitivity of the subject and difficulties in data collecting discouraged most social scientists from exploring this area of human behaviour.

The advent of AIDS and its rapid spread in India has changed the scenario. Today the study of sexual behaviour is an important subject and both national and international agencies, as part of the AIDS control programme, are encouraging research on the subject. Despite this, few studies are available on the subject (for detailed literature review see Nag, 1996; IJSW, 1994) mostly relating to those who are at risk – commercial sex-workers and their clients or truck drivers. Studies on sexual behaviour of the general population, particularly those living in rural areas, are rare while issues like sexual violence are almost completely overlooked.

This paper is based on a detailed qualitative study carried out by the Centre for Operations Research and Training (CORT) on the decision-making process involved in seeking abortion. It was carried out in two villages of central Uttar Pradesh and data was collected by two trained social scientists, who spent about five months in the field using various qualitative approaches – indepth case study, focus group discussions with community members and several informal interviews with health and abortion service providers.

Detailed data was collected on unwanted pregnancy, abortion seeking behaviour, contraception and sexual behaviour including sexual abuse. During the study period, a total of 122 currently married women were informally interviewed several times. Of these, 115 answered questions on sexual behaviour. On average each woman was visited five times and the total time spent with each of them ranged between 8-10 hours. Data on sexual behaviour including frequency of intercourse and sexual violence was collected in the last phase of the field work after the social scientists had developed a good rapport with the informants. Details of selection of women and methodological issues including problems encountered during data collection, particularly on sexual behaviour and insight developed from the field on managing such situations, are discussed elsewhere (CORT, 1996).

It was surprising to note that once women were taken into confidence and we started talking in their 'code' language, extracting information on sexual matters was not as difficult as is generally assumed. For instance, of the 122 women informants, 98 answered all questions related to their sexual behaviour, 17 answered partially while only 7 totally refused any discussion on sex. Analysis of the characteristics of those who answered fully, partially or refused to participate in the study, did not reveal any specific pattern. Information or lack of it depended on the situation of the informant when approached. who was present at that time, or what work she was doing. It is important to point out that complete privacy was not always required to discuss the subject.

In contrast we found that sometimes discussion was easier and more interactive when two or three women were present together as it was the relationship and closeness among them which mattered. In the presence of the husband, mother-in-law or other senior family member, any discussion on sexual matter was, however, very difficult (CORT, 1996).

Before asking women about sexual coercion within consensual union, we had detailed discussions with each of them on their sexual practices at different stages of their married life. Usually such a conversation started with a discussion on whether the women at the time of marriage had knowledge about sex, and to what extent they were mentally ready to enjoy

sex with their husband. Subsequently, questions were asked on their first sexual experience, frequency of intercourse, reaction to their first pregnancy and so on. Information related to sexual coercion has been analysed and presented in this paper.

The analysis showed that in most cases (103 out of 115) *gauna* (cohabitation) took place only when they started menstruating. In few cases (12) though the gauna took place even before menstruation, the woman did not live together with her husband. She either slept with her mother-in-law or went back to her parents' home after living in the in-law's house for a brief period and returned only after menstruation. Though most of them reported having periods before gauna, few women understood its relevance to marriage and childbirth

In the words of Rukmani, a 21 year old illiterate Yadav woman: 'I was married when I was just 13 years old. My period started just a day before my marriage took place I did not know what was happening to me, when I saw the bleeding, I got very scared and started crying and told my mother... No, how was I to know how it was related to marriage or pregnancy. Nobody told me either.'

The study reveals that at the time of marriage, girls generally have little knowledge about sex life, pregnancy and delivery. For instance, none of the 115 women interviewed had a clear knowledge of sexual life after marriage; only 18% had some vague idea (Table 1). Narrating her experience, Rani, a 32 year old illiterate informant with four children said: 'When I first came in contact with my husband, I knew nothing about sex. I was sleeping with my *jethani* (wife of husband's elder brother), when she left the room and sent my husband in. I was embarrassed and just ran away to my mother-in-law. Then both my jethani and sister-in-law pushed me into the room by force and shut the door from outside.'

TABLE 1

Knowledge of Women at the Time of Their Gauna About Sex and Reproduction

Reproductive knowledge	*Did women have knowledge (%)*		
	Yes, but vague	*No*	*Total N*
Sex life which takes place after marriage	18	82	115
How a woman becomes pregnant?	4	96	115
How a woman delivers a child?	4	96	115

Similarly, another informant, Laxmi (32 years) married at the age of 13 years, knew nothing of sexual life after marriage. The first sexual experience came as a blow – she never thought marriage was going to be so different from the gauna of *'gudda-guria shadi'* (doll's marriage) she played among friends. She recalls. 'It was a terrifying experience, when I tried to resist, he pinned my arms above my head. It must have been so painful and suffocating that I fainted for I only remember getting up in the morning and finding stains of blood on the sheet. My husband was no longer in the room. I slowly got up to go to the toilet, feeling sick. While urinating, I experienced pain and a terrible burning sensation.'

Other first person accounts given below reveal how many informants expressed their feeling of experiencing sex in the absence of prior knowledge about sexuality. Sundari, a 33 year old Thakur woman with four years of schooling said: 'When I experienced it first time I knew nothing. I was very nervous and began crying.'

Almost the same feeling was expressed by Ragini, 34 year old woman and mother of two children: 'When I came in contact with my husband only then did I discover everything. That day I cried a lot. It was very painful, but what could I do? I could not go anywhere nor could I tell him anything He did whatever he wanted '

Ramvati, 19 years, who had studied up to class 7, narrated her experience thus: 'I had a vague idea about the sexual relationship. My *bhabhi* told me a little about it before my gauna. She said that this was an inevitable part of a man-woman relationship after marriage. She also advised me to do whatever he says and that I should not say 'no' to him any time. I would say that my bhabhi tried to prepare me mentally about the things which happen after marriage. Still I felt so embarrassed. It was painful and I hated it. He was brutal too. I cried a lot when he left the room.'

Our informal discussions with village women revealed that at the time of marriage they knew nothing about sexuality and most of them were mentally unprepared for the experience. The first sexual encounter with their husband was not one of love and affection but of power where they had to give whatever their husband wanted from them. For most of them, who were very young girls in a strange place where they did not know anybody, their first sexual experience was frightening and instrumental in making them submissive to their husband's wishes. Many felt that despite the trauma they experienced, they were not in a position to resist their husband's sexual coercion. According to them, it was the only way to get the closeness and support of their husband in an in-law's house which is traditionally known for being difficult and demanding of daughters-in-law.

Of the 122 women who answered questions on sexual behaviour, 114 provided information on the frequency of intercourse they generally had in a week. Initially we faced some hesitation before getting the required information. A few typical remarks include some like: 'You are asking too many useless questions; who keeps a count of such details?' However, finally they opened up and many answered in their 'code' words like *'Hum roj nahin bolthe hain, humlog mahine mai do-char din bolte hain '* (We do not speak everyday, we talk just 2-4 times in a month). What they meant was 'we do not have intercourse everyday'. They used *bolte* (speaking) to indicate intercourse.

The analysis revealed that young women aged 15-20 (or those who were married for less than 5 years) had intercourse 3-4 times a week on an average. It declined with age as it dropped to 1-2

times a week for women aged 26-30 and 31-35, but interestingly it increased again to twice a week for women aged 36 years and more. Probing revealed that older husbands, who are less busy in work, seek a more frequent sexual relationship.

Getting information on sexual coercion was still more difficult and has been narrated in detail elsewhere (CORT, 1996). For instance, an informant aged 28 years who had earlier provided considerable information on her sexual experience commented: 'Haven't you already asked me enough?' or, 'I feel shy in answering Aren't you shy in asking such questions?'

Yet another 26 year old educated (who had studied up to class 8) Brahmin informant commented: 'Don't talk about these things in the village. Nobody will answer you on such issues as all this (shamelessness) goes on only in the city, not here.'

However, after persuasion, probing and several visits, 98 out of 115 women answered our questions An analysis of these answers showed frequent sexual abuse by their husband For instance, out of the 98 who answered all questions, 67 (68%) reported sexual coercion – 21% reported physical violence, 14% reported anger, while the remaining 32%, although they admitted sexual coercion by their husband, did not give further details. Most women (70%) could not resist their husband and submitted to his demands (Figure 1). However, about one-third of the women did not report any coercion by their husband.

A few women reported their sexual encounters, not only as traumatic, unwanted or forced, but also as 'rape'. For instance, Girija, who had a difficult and forced sexual encounter with her husb and at a very young age (13 years) commented 'Nobody would call this a normal sexual encounter It can only correctly be labelled as "rape" by her own man. Even now when it comes to sex, at times he gets violent when I resist or refuse to give in to his sexual demands. He warns me, I will go for a second marriage I tell him: all right, it would be good for me also to get rid of a man like you – but I'll see to it that I also get my fair share of the property. Yet in the end he finally gets what he wants.'

Indrani, a 40 year old illiterate woman, expressing her helplessness said: 'What could I do to protect myself from these unwanted pregnancies unless he agrees to do something? I feel so helpless. Once when I gathered the courage and told him I wanted to avoid sex with him, he said what else have I married you for? He beats me for the smallest reasons and has sex whenever he wants. I never had the guts to put forth my wish to him again. Then I thought, after all, wasn't I born for this purpose? It is my duty to serve my husband and that is all that I should remember.'

Rampati, a 26 year old Paasi woman who got married as a twelve half year old said: 'How could a twelve and half year old child enjoy that (sex)?'

Rampati's sexual initiation was like an assault that has left her scarred by a permanent sense of trauma. Talking about her present sexual life she said: 'Of course, there is violence when it comes to that. He has thrashed me, slapped and abused me several times when I refused to have it with him. He said, when I'll have the urge, where will I go? Do you want me to go out, to someone else? What can I say after this? This is the last thing I want. Look, (pointing towards her knees) just yesterday he beat me so hard that my knees are still hurting. I had refused to have sex with him. I told him I wasn't enjoying it At which he said would you like to have it with someone else, if not with me?'

Says Mita, a 25 year old illiterate woman: 'He gets angry when I refuse – but in the end I always agree No, it doesn't reach the degree of violence '

Shanti, a 17 year old informant said: 'No, he never beats me but sometimes abuses me, saying 'What else did I bring you here for? Why did you marry at all? If you do not want to do it with me then go to your parent's house. At last I would submit.'

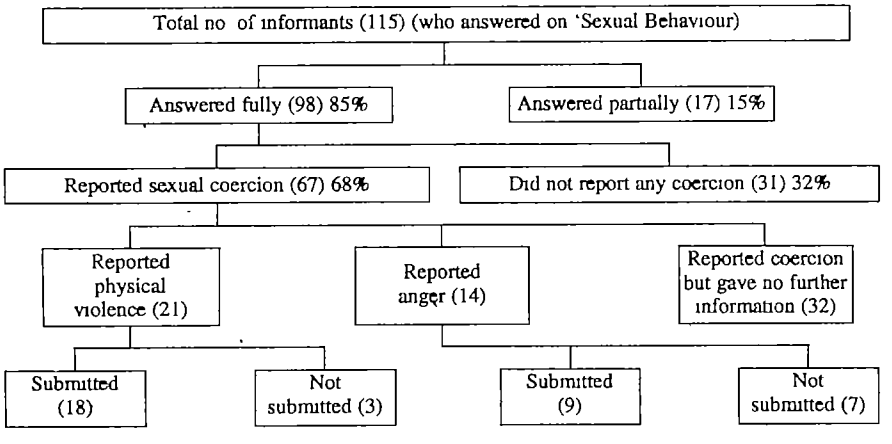
While a majority of women submit to their husband's wish, 30% are generally able to resist sexual coercion by their husbands. The mechanisms used include. a threat to start screaming, endangering his prestige; threaten suicide if forced to have sex; waking up young children who generally sleep with them and reporting false or prolonged menstruation periods.

The following verbatim accounts give the dynamics of interaction which takes place in such situations

Guddi, 19 years old, who has studied up to class 8 and experienced three pregnancies said: 'No he is not violent by nature but when it comes to that (sex), he doesn't agree even on my refusal. He scolds me: if you do not want it, I do. Only three days ago, he slapped me for that. I did not want that. I am always afraid I will get pregnant.'

FIGURE 1

Reporting on Sexual Behaviour and Sexual Violence within Marriage



In the words of 18 year old Rohini, who has passed high school: 'When I refuse to have sex, he gets abusive, slaps me and shakes me hard. At times he says, what good are you? If you can't do this much for me, get out of this house. I will marry again. Sometimes I agree but often I did not, and then I warn him, I will kill myself if you force me; I will take poison At this he gets afraid that if it actually happened, he will be blamed.'

A 21 year old woman, educated up to class 3, said: 'When I try to resist, he hits me with whatever he can lay his hands on. But when I say, if I start yelling and screaming what respect will you have left, he leaves me. He wouldn't do it at the risk of his reputation.'

Similarly a 25 years old, illiterate Lodh (scheduled caste) woman said: 'He gets angry, but he can't force me *now*. Whenever I see what he's up to and I am not in a mood, I wake my child up. As it is, I make him sleep between us What can he do? Earlier when he used force, I couldn't do anything '

Another 30 year old illiterate Thakur woman said: 'Sometimes I stop him by lying that I have a prolonged menstruation. He just gets angry and leaves me alone but sulks and doesn't talk for days.'

23 year Malti, an illiterate woman said: 'If I know that my period would start in the next one or two days, instead of saying 'no' to him I just tell him that my period has started. Sometimes I tell him my period is still continuing. I know he does not like it but he keeps quiet.'

The same thing was reported by Usha, a 25 year old illiterate *dhobi* woman: 'He gets angry but doesn't force me. However, sometimes he doesn't come home for two or three days.'

Generally, refusal and not yielding to husband's coercion comes from relatively younger women, but not before having spent a few years (3 or more) of married life. In the initial stage of their married life, they were as helpless as any other woman.

As indicated earlier, about one-third of the women did not report any sexual abuse by their husband. Generally they said: 'We have an understanding' or 'No, he does not use force.'

According to one 23 year old informant: '... sometimes when I am not in the mood, I tell him I do not want it this time. Generally he asks a few questions like what happened? Or are you all right? But he doesn't force me.'

This preliminary analysis of sexual coercion within marriage brings out several important findings. First, most girls have no knowledge about sexuality and the family formation process at the time of their marriage. Because of this, they are not prepared mentally for the sexual life which suddenly starts after marriage. Often it is shocking for them and has adverse psychological consequences. For many, sexual union becomes repulsive and remains only a means of enjoyment for their husbands.

The study also reveals frequent sexual coercion within marriage. Husbands take it as their 'right' to have complete control over the body and sexuality of their wives. The prevailing social structure and value system supports and perpetuates this assumed 'right' and is well reflected in the comments of the informants, who feel that their role as wife is one of resignation.

Violence could result if women refuse to submit to the sexual desire of their husbands. This study also contradicts the general belief that women are subjected to sexual violence and rape largely by strangers or 'outsiders'. The study shows it is insiders – their own husbands – who are the main perpetrators of sexual coercion and abuse, which certainly works as a mechanism to keep women submissive to their husband.

Another observation is that often women's resistance to sex, and the resultant sexual violence, starts from their fear of an unwanted pregnancy. According to the present study, most women had experienced two or more unwanted pregnancies (CORT, 1996). The limited access of women to safe and effective contraceptives, coupled with their lack of control over sexuality, exposes them to unwanted pregnancies and a higher rate of maternal morbidity as well as mortality arising from pregnancy complications

Systematic and persistent advocacy, as well as remedial measures are required to address the drudgery and violence women face both in their own families and society. No single intervention can change the situation unless a well-conceived plan of action addressing the socio-economic and legal rights of women is developed and implemented. This demands both resources and political commitment.

In the short term, however, some immediate initiatives may be taken to reduce the drudgery of women. The first, and perhaps the most important, would be the introduction of family life education through different channels and forums to prepare adolescent boys and girls for married life and contraception. Such an education would go a long way in reducing the trauma which young girls often experience immediately after marriage. This may also help in reducing their revulsion against sexual relations which some develop after an initial 'shocking' experience. Proper orientation to family life and reproduction could make sexual life enjoyable to both the partners. It could also save women from worries related to their first pregnancy and childbirth.

Similarly, interventions aimed at increasing the accessibility of women to safe and effective contraception and helping them to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies would reduce some of their drudgery and help them to enjoy a safe sexual life.

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Eradicating 'targetitis'

ASHISH BOSE

MORE than a decade ago, while engaged in field work in various parts of India, I discovered a new disease which I decided to name 'targetitis'. It had claimed many victims, starting from medical and paramedical personnel in thousands of Primary Health Centres (PHCs) and subcentres (SCs), to revenue officials at the lower level, going right up to high officials in the state and central Ministries of Health and Family Welfare.

Targetitis started when, under misguided foreign advice, bureaucrats in the Department of Family Planning accepted the dubious premise that the family planning programme would work with unprecedented efficiency if the central government sitting in Nirman Bhawan set 'targets' for acceptance of family planning by millions of married men and women ('eligible couples' to use government terminology) all over the country, state-wise, district-wise and down to PHCs and SCs. If 'fulfilled', these targets would dramatically bring down India's birth-rate. Foreign experts and their Indian cronies, naively equated human reproduction with the production of cement, steel or textiles. As family welfare was a totally state sponsored and financed programme, central government bureaucrats exercised their power to direct the states to fulfil targets and report the progress every quarter and month, in the name of monitoring the programme.

This is how the chief secretary and the health secretary of each state received a quota of targets which was then distributed to every district. The district authorities in turn distributed these to blocks, PHCs and SCs It was a command performance with a vengeance. To make matters worse, the central government also specified the method of family planning to be adopted by the people (in government terminology 'method mix') – sterilization, IUD (intrauterine contraceptives device), conventional contraceptives (condoms – called 'cc' by the ministry) and oral pills. This was perhaps the most ridiculous part of the story. Sex and reproduction can hardly be guided by rules that govern the public sector! Yet foreign experts and bureaucrats justified this by saying: 'How else could we plan for the supply of free contraceptives and sterili-zation facilities all over the country? Can any programme run without a target?' Management experts swore by targets as a management strategy. Tragically, these targets became an end and not a means to run the family planning programme efficiently in order to curb the birthrate.

Another fancy idea of foreign experts was awarding cash compensation to the acceptors of family planning. However, soon 'compensation' paved the way for 'incentives' in cash and kind. For example, the central government gave

Rs 160 to every person undergoing sterilization and Rs 9 for each IUD. The 'motivators' (whom I call *dalals*, or brokers) were also rewarded. When the hi-tech method of female sterilization – laparoscopy – was introduced, guest doctors were paid extra money. Several state governments introduced 'additional incentives' for sterilization to speed up family planning work. During the Emergency, incentives in kind (like utensils, clothes, *ghee* and so on) were distributed to attract 'volunteers'. In short, the programme became prone to corruption – one could make money by reporting false cases of sterilization or IUD.

Along with incentives, a set of 'disincentives' also crept in. PHC doctors and ANMs at the sub-centres were given an adverse report in their CR (confidential report), their annual increment was held up, they were transferred to remote areas or similarly 'punished' if they failed to fulfil targets. The revenue officials who were also expected to fulfil their quota of family planning cases, resorted to arm-twisting techniques to procure cases.

During the Emergency, the family planning programme (rather the sterilization programme) received the highest priority from Sanjay Gandhi – the extra-constitutional authority of the time. Chief ministers vied with each other to jack up family planning targets and pressurized the bureaucracy ande police to fulfil targets to the maximum extent possible to please this extra-constitutional authority. After the 1977 general elections which swept Indira Gandhi and all her ministers out of power, she realized how greatly she had been misled on the family planning campaign. Such was the fury of the masses that the ruling Congress Party failed to win a single seat out of the 85 which the most populous state of U.P. sends to Parliament. The issue was family planning and the coercive nature of the programme during the Emergency. My field work in states like Haryana reveals that even after two decades the masses have neither forgotten nor forgiven the government for the excesses of the Emergency. Nor have the lower level medical and paramedical bureaucracy forgotten the tyranny of targets.

When the Janata Party came to power in 1977, the new government renamed 'family planning' as 'family welfare'. Instead of targets, the state now 'expected performance'. But the Indian bureaucracy (like bureaucracies everywhere) believes in the status quo. So in reality, nothing really changed. The 'family welfare' programme collapsed for a few years and started improving gradually. Targets once again entered the picture. People were not forced but in the name of incentives and disincentives the lower-level bureaucracy was pressurized to perform and it responded by cooking up figures on the number of acceptors. The monitoring and evaluation division of the Department of Family Welfare continued to dish out figures on the percentage of targets achieved, 'equivalent sterilizations', couple protection rate (CPR) and 'birth averted' – predictably, all success stories It was easy for foreign donor agencies and Indian bureaucrats to buy the services of Indian demographers who justified the targets.

As a professional researcher deeply engaged with rural field work, I could not remain silent. In my presidential address to the annual conference of the Indian Association for the Study of Population in 1987, I attacked the Department of Family Welfare for running such a poor programme in an address called 'For Whom the Target Tolls'. I also wrote a book, whose title summed up my thesis: *From Population to People* (1988, 2 volumes), discussing in detail why I opposed family planning targets. Every Secretary of the Department of Family Welfare was presented a complimentary copy of the book. It must be put on record that the Government of India took full ten years to abandon the targets. Targets were not abandoned because of my unsolicited advice but because the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, September 1994), in its programme of Action (para 7.12) stated: 'Demographic goals, while legitimately the subject of government development strategies, should not be imposed on family planning providers in the form of targets or quotas for the recruitment of clients.'

In 1987, I pleaded for abandoning the family planning targets and said: 'We hope that the government will concentrate its energy on mobilising district magistrates, patwaris and revenue officials *not* for fulfilling dubious sterilization targets but for stamping out illiteracy in the new generation as fast as possible. This is the only short-cut to human resource development' (*From Population to People* , Vol. I, p. 151, 1988).

Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi did consult me on restructuring the family planning programme. I pleaded for not only abandoning targets but also all incentives in cash or kind including cash awards to states (Rs 25 million) for 'good' family planning performance. He nominated me on his Advisory Council for Implementation of the 20-Point Programme. I challenged the family planning performance statistics and the figures for CPR (couple protection rate). To me, CPR meant 'community participation rate' which in my opinion was almost zero. Rajiv Gandhi accepted my advice. Ultimately, cash awards were given up but it took years before the Department of Family Welfare made two districts in each state 'target free' every year. This was ridiculous. U.P. with 68 districts would take 34 years to be target free, I pointed out. Unfortunately, Rajiv Gandhi did not get a chance to restructure the family planning programme.

In 1993, Narasimha Rao's government appointed an expert group on population policy headed by M.S. Swaminathan of which I was a member. In our report submitted to the Prime Minister in 1994 we said: 'No targets for specific contraceptive methods would be set by the central and state governments, except the goal of achieving a national average Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.1 by the year 2010. This implies that targets for specific contraceptive methods would be abandoned. These steps would help to move away from physical targets and to

concentrate on the availability and accessibility of contraceptives, keeping in mind the urgent need for improving the quality of services rendered to the people' (quoted by Ashish Bose in India's Population Policy: Changing Paradigm, p. 210, 1996).

No action followed the recommendations of the Swaminathan Committee. Only the draft policy statement was tabled in Parliament in June 1994

Come September 1994. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare got all excited about the UN Cairo Conference. The nation's interests were at stake. Unfortunately, so were the personal interests of some senior bureaucrats hoping for a post-retirement consultancy unless UN recommendations were promptly accepted. And what a somersault the bureaucracy took! The Department of Family Planning which had ridiculed me for opposing targets now says in its Manual on Target Free Approach in Family Welfare Programme (August 1996): 'The contraceptive target monitoring now being done has led to a situation where the achievement of contraceptive targets has become an end in itself.... It has also been observed that a disproportionately large proportion of the target (40%) is achieved in the last 3 months of the financial year although the service ought to be provided evenly throughout the year.'

In plain English, this means that the data are cooked up in the last quarter of the financial year! For anybody who has done field work, this is elementary knowledge. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare deserves kudos on its new strategy put into operation from 1 April, 1996.

If one goes by the Manual of the Ministry, the future of target free approach is bleak. It is the classic tweedledum and tweedledee syndrome. The Ministry did the wrong thing by commissioning a set of what I call 'decimal point demographers' and mindless officials to prepare this manual. The manual rightly states that 'while there are no two opinions about the need to remove numerical targets for the sake of quality of service, there is a concern that such a move, when taken countrywide, may lead to decline in performance initially' But instead of recognising the need for a switch over to a *different system of delivery of services* with a focus on quality, the manual hangs on to the old system. To quote it at length: 'A system of getting estimates of expected levels of acceptance from the state government was in vogue for the last three years but now this exercise will be carried out by the grassroots workers in consultation with the community to estimate real needs assessment. This will be coupled with the formulation of a PHC level plan covering all activities of family welfare, the materials and supplies and an operational strategy to achieve the objectives '

Note that the PHC level plan is for covering all activities of family welfare! There is no mention of health: subsequently, however, there is a reference to the 'PHC based Family Welfare Health Care Plan' (*Sic*). Even here, family welfare precedes health care. Again, a case of putting the cart before the horse!

I was at the United Nations Conference at Cairo (1994). I am aware of the heated controversy over abortion. In India, the government terminology for abortion is MTP (medical termination of pregnancy) and is *not* advocated as a family planning method. Yet the manual seeks to legitimize MTP as one. To quote from the manual: 'The summary report is also required to be given to Chief Director (E&I), Department of Family. Welfare... New Delhi by telegram or Fax....'

In one column were placed the following items: 'Vasectomy done; Tubectomy done; Total Sterilization done; Condom pieces distributed; Oral pill cycles distributed; T.T. (PW) doses given; DPT doses given; OPV doses given; BCG doses given; Measles vaccine doses given; *MTP performed*; Vit A doses given, ORS packets distributed'. Against this were two columns called 'progress of the month' and 'cumulative total'.

It is odd that the 'progress' of MTP has to be reported as a family planning method and a fax sent about it. Does this mean that a fax must be sent if a pregnant women is dying or a child needs urgent medical help? Frankly, the only progress I find is in respect of a Fax! The rest is what villagers call *khanapuri* (filling up the slots on paper).

The plain fact is that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is incapable of running a worthwhile family planning programme in India Having convincingly demonstrated their incompetence over the last three decades, they now want to seek cover under an international buzzword – Reproductive Health. What they fail to realize is that there cannot be reproductive health without health.

A somewhat comical aspect of the new strategy (as I found out during a recent spell of field work) is that villagers are by now used to the word 'target' They also correctly understand the English word 'free'. But they don't understand what a 'target-fee' programme means because for them the programme was always free. In fact, they received some money after sterilization.

To my mind, making the programme target-free cannot be called a family planning *strategy*. Target is not the only issue. The basic issue is that men have walked out of the programme ... family planning has become a gender issue Thanks to cable TV and the relentless efforts to inject sex in every advertisement and third rate movie, *crime against women has increased*. The nurses (ANMs) are not secure. But what does the new strategy say on this issue? The manual says that 'Grass root level workers like ANM... shall be asked to give an estimate of the various family welfare activities required in the area/population covered by them...'. This means that she has to consult school teachers, *pradhans*, members of the *panchayat* and people like them. Then God save the ANMs when they venture on a mission to assess the family planning requirements in their area!

Anybody who has done field work in India would have realized that in the mind-set of the masses family planning

is equated with sterilization alone. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is wholly responsible for this state of affairs. Today, rather than invoking the magic buzzword of reproductive health, the government must communicate with the people effectively if it wants to change this mind-set. In spite of the rhetoric, the fact is that both Indian and foreign experts just don't know how to effectively communicate to the masses that family planning and sterilization are not synonymous terms

Reproductive health, which includes family planning, abortion, AIDS and so on, is another story altogether. I am not suggesting that reproductive health is unimportant but it seems to me that the *new international packaging of family planning* will not work in states like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (what I call BIMARU states). The family planning programme has completely lost its credibility and the only way to restore it is to return to India's *first* five year plan which had the blessing of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Nehru, who understood the heartbeat of people better than any population expert today, deliberately did not put family planning in a separate basket but placed it under the health ministry. It was foreign *kubuddhi* (bad advice) which led us to make family planning a separate fiefdom in 1966. If we wish to highlight reproductive health, we must think of a total package of health. That is why the Swaminathan Committee (which submitted its report much before the Cairo conference) recommended the merger of the Family Welfare Department with Health, a recommendation totally unacceptable to the bureaucracy because of its vested interest.

If the Deve Gowda government means business, it must give the highest priority to the basic needs of the masses, or what the five year plans call 'Minimum Needs' programme Family planning must be a part of primary health care, a basic need. A government which cannot assure safe drinking water to the people has no right to distribute free contraceptives *instead*. Development is the most effective contraceptive.

Involving the male

SANJEEV KUMAR

THE World Health Organization (WHO) defines reproductive health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Reproductive health addresses the reproductive processes, functions and system at all stages of life. Therefore, it implies that people are able to have *a responsible, satisfying and safe* sexual life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the *freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so*. Implicit in this last condition is the right of men and women to be informed of and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of fertility regulation of their choice and the right of access to appropriate health care services.

The Programme of Action (POA) adopted by consensus at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) stresses the importance of the reproductive rights and reproductive health for both men and women. Emphasizing the need for equity in gender relations and responsible sexual behaviour, the POA notes that males as well as females must have access to appropriate information and services to achieve good sexual health and exercise their reproductive rights and responsibilities. There was agreement in Cairo that special efforts should be made to promote men's active involvement in such areas:

> 'Special efforts should be made to emphasize men's shared responsibility and promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood, sexual and reproductive behaviour, including family planning; prenatal, maternal

and child health; prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV prevention of unwanted and high-risk pregnancies, shared control and contribution to family income, children's education, health and nutrition; and recognition and promotion of the equal value of children of both sexes. Male responsibilities in family life must be included in the education of children from the earliest ages. Special emphasis should be placed on the prevention of violence against women and children.'

The POA urges that actions be initiated early in life and calls upon parents and schools to ensure that attitudes of respect towards 'women and girls as equals are instilled in boys from the earliest possible age' and that programmes reach boys before they become sexually active.

The Platform for Action, approved at the Fourth World Conference on Women, reiterated the central role of men in contributing to the full access of women to health care and related information and services and, concomitantly, to self-determination and well-being Men's roles are seen as part of a strategy of strengthen preventive programmes that address threats to women's health. The Platform notes the need to:

'Reinforce laws, reform institutions and promote norms and practices that eliminate discrimination against women and encourage both women and men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour, ensure full respect for the integrity of the person, take action to ensure the conditions necessary for women to exercise their reproductive rights and eliminate coercive laws and practices '

It also addresses the need to 'design specific programmes for men of all ages and male adolescents, recognizing the parental roles referred to in paragraph 108(e), aimed at providing complete and accurate information on safe and responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour, including voluntary, appropriate and effective male methods for the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases through, *inter alia*, abstinence and condom use.'

Although the burden of ill-health associated with reproduction affects women to a much larger extent than men, and the fact that few reproductive health problems men face are life-threatening, these problems do affect men's quality of life and may have serious repercussions on women's health In women, STDs, for example, often lead to infertility and cervical cancer Some reproductive health problems, such as urological disorders, affect men and women. In women, genito-urinary disorders may remain non-symptomatic and undiagnosed for a long time. In men, these disorders tend to be associated with early signs, which lead to diagnosis and treatment. Others disorders, such as prostate and testicular cancer, solely affect men. Finally, problems like sexual dysfunction have deep psychological effects and may cause males to seek medical treatment and/or counselling.

Organized population and family planning programmes have concentrated largely on women for three pragmatic reasons: they are the ones who become pregnant, most modern contraceptive methods are for females and, consequently, family planning services have been offered in MCH/FP outlets. As family planning programmes are faced with new challenges, such as rising rates of STD and HIV infection, programme managers increasingly recognize that marginalizing men is harmful to women's health as well. With the recognition of men's dominant role in many societies and their influence on women's contraceptive use and reproductive decision-making, the idea of male involvement has increasingly been promoted by decision-makers of population and development programmes.

'Male involvement' is used as an umbrella term to encompass the various ways in which men relate to reproductive health problems and programmes, reproductive rights and reproductive behavior Male involvement in reproductive health has two major facets: (*i*) The way men accept and indicate support to their partners' needs, choices and rights in reproductive health; and (*ii*) Men's own reproductive and sexual behaviour

Other terms that are often used in this context are responsibility and participation. The term responsibility stresses the need for men to assume responsibility for the consequences of their sexual and reproductive behaviour, such as caring for their offspring, using contraception to take the burden off their partner and practicing safer sexual behaviours to protect themselves, their partners and their families from STDs , including HIV.

The term 'participation' may seem self-evident since men *de facto* participate more than women in population and reproductive health programmes, as policy-makers, media gate-keepers, religious leaders, managers and service providers, community leaders and heads of households. In this context, 'participation' refers to men's supportive role in their families, communities and workplace to promote gender equity, girl's education, women's empowerment and the sharing of household chores and child-rearing. Participation also suggests a more active role for men in both decision-making and behaviours, such as sharing reproductive decision-making with their partners, supporting their partner's choices and using contraception and/or periodic abstinence.

Including men in family planning outreach and service delivery programmes could contribute to more equitable relations between partners and improved communication regarding reproductive goals.

Men need information, counselling and services to address a wide range of problems and concerns related to reproductive health. Most men are poorly informed regarding sexuality and reproduction and need information about male and female anatomy, contraception, STD and AIDS prevention and women's health care requirements during pregnancy and childbirth. They also need confidence and guidance on how to share decisions and negotiate choices with their partners. Clinical services are needed to address

common problems, such as uro-genital infections, STDs and infertility, and to provide voluntary male sterilization. Depending upon the availability of treatment facilities, screening for prostate and testicular cancer may be appropriate.

A major weakness of earlier programmes involving males was a lack of focus on desired outcomes. Traditionally, most male-involvement programmes consisted of broad educational talks to groups of men, with little attempt to elicit their interests and concerns or to provide follow-up services. Because this approach was seldom linked to discernible increases in contraceptive use, many programmes conclude that overtures to men were ineffective and unnecessary.

Effective male-involvement programmes are designed to address some specific problem or impediment, such as restrictions on condom advertising and promotion, female reticence to use contraception due to spousal disapproval, rising rates of STD/HIV infection, out-of-wedlock pregnancy and domestic violence. By specifying the problem and desired outcome, programme planners can identify key groups of males who are susceptible to change through programme interventions.

Promoting reproductive health entails ensuring equitable access to services and information, protecting individual rights and respecting individual choices regarding reproduction. In bringing men into the reproductive decision-making process, service providers may jeopardize women's autonomy and self determination because they fear hostility, violence and rejection if their partners learn of their actions. Service providers have an obligation to protect women's privacy, but such actions have a bearing on the ability of men to implement their reproductive goals.

One factor impeding greater action on male involvement is that, beyond compiling data on condom and vasectomy use, most reproductive health programmes collect little information on male services and activities. The lack of interest in male activities among high level managers translates into neglect and apathy throughout the various levels of the service delivery system. Many clinic record forms have no space to record male visits for counselling, instruction on condom use or referral for other reproductive health services, such as STD treatment. Outreach workers receive credit for the number of women they have visited, discussions with men are not counted. Merely by adding indicators of male involvement activities to the record keeping system, programme managers send a powerful message to staff throughout the agency Such indicators ensure that staff will receive male-involvement activities and will strive to do more in this area.

We know more about why women are unable to use contraception or practise safer sex, than we do about what determines men's sexual and reproductive behaviour. To date, men have been, if not left out, then considered of little consequence in family planning. For one thing, family planning programmes have had little to offer them in terms of contraceptive methods – there is either the condom or sterilization, and nothing in between (as withdrawal and abstinence are rarely discussed). But even if there were other options for men, would they use them? Would men elect to use, for example, a long-acting but reversible medical method when thus far they have not embraced hose that involve little or no actual risk to their health?

On the other hand, we now have considerable evidence that men's attitudes can profoundly affect the ability of women to use contraception (or to protect themselves from diseases) effectively Clearly, there is need to 'bring men in', even with the limited selection of male methods currently available. But before we run on to address 'how' we do this, we first need to carefully examine the query, 'bring them in *where*?'

It has been a long and hard fight – and one that is far from over – to even affirm that women have a right to control their own sexuality Therefore, the process of integrating men into the reproductive health equation needs to be weighed carefully against the embryonic, and still precarious, rights of women to control their bodies, especially their reproductive functions. We need to find ways to involvement as supportive partners and not simply make them another 'target' audience – possibly without engendering in them a sense of real concern for their partners' well-being.

For many men the world of female reproduction is shrouded in mystery. Much of what they do know, they have learned from male peers who are often as ignorant as they are. Yet male pride makes it difficult for them to ask questions. In Sierra Leone, the Marie Stopes family planning/reproductive health clinics have always tried to create a welcoming atmosphere for men. At first the men simply accompanied their wives and children and occasionally asked few questions. Then they began to come themselves, usually for treatment of STDs or in relation to concerns about infertility. Now their demand for information and services has become so great that Marie Stopes, in resource-poor Sierra Leone, has opened a separate clinic for men – emphasizing that with even modest adjustments, family planning and reproductive health services could involve men.

Traditional gender divisions between the worlds of women and men are breaking down not only in response to the changing roles of women but as a result of a changing world economy. As the ability of men in both Northern and Southern countries to provide economic support and protection has declined, so has men's (and women's) security in these traditional concepts of masculinity. Men in many cultures today face two main problems in fulfilling traditional forms of wealth and power that bring honour to man, and an inability to generate cash or other requirements necessary to attain the modern life styles enshrined in the popular media. One response to these pressures appears to be a retreat from family obligations and holding on to declining authority through violence.

Many men, however, are seeking to broaden concepts of masculinity to include a more active role in the care and nurturing of children They also wish to establish a more rewarding relationship with their partners. Whether in focus groups or through studies, many men today express a desire to change themselves and their lives in the hope that they can offer their sons a more flexible basis for the development of their sense of self-esteem.

These inevitable changes in gender roles that accompany modernization, while initially painful, can potentially offer women and men expanded opportunities to take on new and varied roles and to experience greater self-fulfilment. Family planning, pregnancy support, *post partum* and STD/HIV programmes all clearly have a role to play here. Offering men opportunities to become more informed about and involved in the reproductive process and the avoidance of STDs is a first but vital step that supports less rigid and more positive involvement of men in contemporary family life.

Interest in male-involvement programmes is growing, and there is increasing evidence that such programmes can be effective in improving male and female reproductive health and increasing contraceptive use. Male involvement is needed in reproductive health programmes in all stages of development – from the early stages in which community and political support is critical to later stages that focus on expanding and improving services. Examples of ways in which male-involvement interventions have benefited reproductive health programmes include: encouraging men to be more supportive of their partners and communicate with then on reproductive and sexual matters, providing an alternative to couples who are dissatisfied with their current contraceptive method, promoting responsible sexual behaviour among people, introducing family planning in conservative areas where women's movements and access to information are restricted, helping women to avoid STD and HIV infection and raising contraceptive prevalence levels by increasing method choice.

A major message from the field is that programmes can accomplish a great deal by simply paying attention to male involvement. Male-involvement need not detract from women's services or jeopardize women's autonomy. The goal is to forge a new partnership, based on mutual respect and cooperation. Not all individuals or couples will subscribe to this ideal, but acknowledging men's role in reproduction and sexual behaviour is an important and necessary step in moving towards it.

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From rhetoric to action

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REPRODUCTIVE rights and health have been the focus of much attention and discussion since the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo. The ICPD marked a turning point in the history of population policy-making and programming. The World Population Plan of Action for the decade shifted attention away from fertility and population growth rates to issues of gender equity, and women's reproductive rights and health.

Several factors influenced this shift in paradigm. The AIDS pandemic resulted in an increasing concern with sexual behaviour, and continuing high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality resulted in dissatisfaction among service providers regarding the limitations of existing MCH/FP programmes.[1] Equally important was the pressure from feminists on international population and family planning agencies who demanded the acknowledgment of women's right to control their fertility.

Reproductive rights has for long been on the agenda of women's health movements across the globe. The demand for reproductive rights emerged from the realization that despite substantial differences in their lives in different settings, women around the world generally lacked control over their bodies, their sexual lives, reproductive decisions and health.[2] External control over women's bodies

1 Fred Sai and Janet Nassim, 'The need for a reproductive health approach', *International Journal Gynaecology and Obstetrics*, Supplement 3, 1989,103-113

2 Moreno C Garcia and A Claro, Challenges From the Women's Movement Women's Rights Versus Population Control, in Sen, Germain and Chen (eds.), *Population Policies Reconsidered Health, Empowerment and Rights* Harvard School of Public Health, Massachusetts, 1994

was exerted through a patriarchal ideology within the family and community on the one hand, and state policies on the other. Some examples of this are: demographically driven population control policies, pronatalist policies which restricted access to contraception, restriction of abortion in many countries of the world, and criminalization of homosexuality in some countries.

The definition of reproductive rights by women's movements has evolved over the years and is now generally understood as the right of women to: regulate their own fertility safely and effectively by conceiving when desired, terminating unwanted pregnancies and carrying wanted pregnancies to term, bear and raise healthy children; and remain free of disease, disability, fear, pain or death associated with reproduction (and the reproductive system) and sexuality

Reproductive health is thus seen as a part of women's reproductive rights. Reproductive health services are an essential part, but not the whole, of the package of interventions and policies necessary for the promotion of women's reproduc-tive health. The idea that health is a development issue is widely accepted. Reproductive health is similarly a 'women's empowerment' and 'gender equity' issue.

Many problems relating to women's reproductive health originate from gender inequities and the limited responsibility men take for the consequences of their sexuality and fertility. For example, early marriages followed by adolescent pregnancies which carry a high risk of morbidity and mortality, signify women's lack of control over the choice of sexual partners and the spacing/number of children. Unwanted pregnancies, backstreet abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS) in most women are often the consequence of the male partners' less than responsible sexual behaviour. Again, women alone bear the burden of contraception in a majority of cases.

There are two important enabling factors underlying women's reproductive health: *power* and *resources*. Therefore, in order to provide them with good reproductive health, women must be able to make decisions and have control over their bodies and lives. More importantly, they need access to resources that will enable such a choice: individual resources such as education and economic independence, and household and community resources such as fulfilment of basic needs and access to basic infrastructural facilities.[3]

Is a focus on reproductive health antithetical to the feminist struggle for recognition of women as 'more than mere reproducers'? On the contrary, the demand for reproductive health is part of women's struggle not to be subordinated or controlled as a consequence of their biological role as bearers of children. In the absence of means to control or regulate their fertility, women's lives are dominated by their role in biological reproduction. They suffer social and economic disadvantages because of their sole responsibility for child care. Women's mobility is restricted because they run the 'risk of being impregnated', and their sexuality controlled through the threat of an unwanted pregnancy.

The focus on reproductive health has been criticized in some quarters as being too narrow, and that it is important to talk instead about 'women's health'. A demand for 'basics' has never meant that other needs are unimportant. There is no doubt that reproductive health is only one component of women's health concerns, but a significant one nevertheless. Denial of women's right to better reproductive health through policies and programmes (implicit or explicit) that take control of their bodies away from women is a political issue. It is not merely a question of an absence of some essential components or one of better standards of care. The priority to be accorded to reproductive health cannot therefore be assessed merely in terms of numbers of lives lost or morbidity suffered by women from causes related to reproduction.

It is against such a backdrop that this paper seeks to examine major reproductive and related health concerns in the Indian context, and to outline some basic principles and strategies for a reproductive health programme guided by principles of gender equity and women's empowerment.

The health problems that Indian women face arise from a complex combination of factors, including poverty and inequality which affect both men and women. Disadvantages arising from an undervaluation of women in a patriarchal social setting: neglect of the female child, nutritional deficiencies, illiteracy, limited access to resources, low self-esteem and lack of decision-making powers, are also contributing factors. These combine to aggravate the health risks associated with sexuality and reproduction, resulting in the high mortality rates and chronic low grade morbidity for women.

The starting point of any reproductive health agenda in the Indian context should be the elimination of discrimination against the female child. One reason for this is that the health consequences of discrimination extend well into their reproductive years A second, and more important, reason is that discrimination and under-investment in girls is incompatible with an approach that seeks to empower women and vest in them the power and resources to make decisions concerning their reproductive and sexual lives.

While there is limited information on the special health needs of adolescents in India, studies on violence against women (see below) suggest that at least among women, violence and suicide are highest in the age group 15-20. Young adolescent girls may also be more vulnerable to sexual abuse. Further, girls in the age group 15-19 seem to suffer the maximum gender-specific disadvantage as compared to boys. The mortality rate for girls in this age group is 50% higher than

3 R Petchesky and S Correa, Reproductive and Sexual Rights A Feminist Perspective, in Sen, Germain and Chen (eds), *Population Policies Reconsidered Health, Empowerment and Rights* Harvard School of Public Health, Massachusetts, 1994

the rate for boys, and the gap is more pronounced in rural than in urban areas.[4] This is probably because adolescent girls in this age group are exposed to the combined disadvantages of gender-based neglect as well as high reproductive risks.

Evidence from several developing countries indicates that risks related to reproduction during adolescence have increased significantly with rapid social changes. Studies from relatively conservative societies such as Algeria, Morocco and Egypt indicate that unwed motherhood is a significant problem. In Algeria, 30% of women who committed suicide between 1979 and 1984 were pregnant and unmarried [5]

Judging from such evidence it is reasonable to assume that sexual activity outside marriage is on the increase even in India. Besides exposing young girls to the danger of an early and unwanted pregnancy, it places them at risk to sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). STDs are globally most prevalent among the young, the highest rates being in the 20-24 age group, followed by the 15-19 year olds. According to the WHO, at least half those infected with HIV are under 25, with the 15-19 age group having the second-highest rates of AIDS.[6]

In the Indian context, married adolescents in the 15-19 age group have a relatively high fertility rate, while there is a near absence of contraceptive prevalence among this group. This is cause for concern both for risk of pregnancy and infection-related consequences. Adolescent pregnancies carry a high risk of morbidity and mortality, the risk of sexually transmitted infections is also high as condom-use can hardly be promoted among a couple who are 'expected' by the family to have a child immediately.

Most of these health problems have to do with 'behaviour' that is not in the interest of the adolescent. Such behaviour is related to lack of power and access to resources, and the consequent inability to deal effectively with demands and challenges posed by the rapid physical and social changes occurring in their lives

A focus on adolescent health therefore calls for comprehensive and collaborative programming to include:

* information on sexuality, fertility and contraception, as part of their 'reproductive rights';
* development of self-awareness, a positive self-image, assertiveness and an understanding of gender-based discrimination and control of women's sexuality;
* development of psycho-social skills such as decision-making, problem solving, effective articulation, and coping with emotions and stress, and
* development of survival/practical skills such as literacy and training for an occupation This is especially important in our setting where the majority of adolescents are out-of-school, illiterate and have limited work opportunities.

However, it is equally important that health services target and reach out to adolescent girls, and design locally relevant interventions that have as their objective the elimination of the large excess mortality that girls in this age group suffer.

India has among the highest maternal mortality rates known in the world The recently completed National Family Health Survey reports the maternal mortality ratio for the country to be 420/100,000 live births, with 55/100,000 women of childbearing ages succumbing to maternal causes According to the few community studies on maternal mortality, most of these deaths can be prevented through appropriate and timely intervention [7]

One of these studies also found that women who had predisposing health conditions are more likely to die than those who start their pregnancy in good health, pointing to the need for going beyond pregnancy specific interventions.[8] A broader approach is also important because communicable diseases pose a serious risk of mortality for pregnant women. For example, in Rajasthan's Udaipur district, maternal deaths in one of the major hospitals increased significantly due to epidemics of malaria and hepatitis.[9]

Maternal morbidity, being far less dramatic and far more difficult to identify than maternal death, has tended to receive little attention from policy-makers and programme planners. The major long term effects of childbearing under adverse conditions are related to injuries from obstructed labour, obstetric haemorrhage and puerperal infection The consequences include utero-vaginal prolapse, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), secondary infertility, anaemia and fistulae. All these are chronic conditions and may affect women for the rest of their lives.

For India, one of the most often quoted studies is from Rajasthan, showing that for every single maternal death, there were 60 episodes of morbidity, of which 18 were directly related to pregnancy and birth.[10] According to a study from Chengalpattu among rural scheduled caste poor women, during 1988, 42% of women who had had at least one delivery had suffered from one or more serious problems related to pregnancy and childbirth. In a prospective follow-up of 32 pregnant women from a sub-sample of this study, only 12 resulted in a normal and healthy birth, implying an even higher rate of pregnancy related complications (63%) While there were no maternal deaths, there was one miscarriage, two

4 Sample Registration Survey, three year moving averages of age specific mortality rates by sex for 1989-1991.

5. International Planned Parenthood Federation Unsafe Abortion and Sexual Health in the Arab World The Damascus Conference, 1992

6 P Senanayake and M Ladjali, 'Adolescent Health Changing Needs', *International Journal of Gynaecology and Obstetrics* 46, 1994, 137-143

7 J.C Bhatia, *A Study of Maternal Mortality in Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh, India* Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, 1988; P H Reddy, *Maternal Mortality in Karnataka* Population Research Centre, Bangalore, 1994.

8 J C Bhatia, op cit

9 Personal communication from Dr Vinaya Pendse, Udaipur, 1994

10 K K. Datta, et al , Morbidity pattern amongst rural pregnant women in Alwar, Rajasthan a COHORT study, *Health and Population Perspectives and Issues* 3(4) 1980, 282-92

neonatal deaths and four premature deliveries. In 10 other cases, labour was prolonged, resulting in perineal tear and in five of them, accompanied by severe blood loss.[11]

For the thousands of women who suffer from long term gynaecological problems as a result of pregnancy and delivery-related complications, often there is no public health clinic to go to for treatment. The MCH programme is concerned with the pregnant woman, and there too only with anaemia control and immunization against tetanus. The programme has failed to ensure trained attendance at delivery, closely associated with complication rates and risk of death. In 9 out of 14 Indian states, more than 50% of deliveries were attended by untrained personnel, as recently as in 1991.[12] Even this may be an overestimate as 'trained' attendance is not clearly defined

Anaemia during pregnancy is another widely prevalent problem. A recent Indian study found 90% of pregnant women to be anaemic (below 11g/dl of haemoglobin). Of these, 60% were moderately anaemic and 40% were severely anaemic.[13] An earlier study in rural U.P found that half of a group of pregnant women who were not anaemic early in their pregnancies became anaemic after 3 months, so anaemia was either caused or precipitated by the pregnancy.[14]

Anaemic women have maternal mortality rates of as high as 1000 per 100,000 live births, about 2.5 times the national average.[15] They are also two to three times more likely to have low-birth weight babies, or suffer miscarriages, stillbirths or early child loss.[16] An anaemic woman is unable to cope with even a mild haemorrhage *post partum*, is at a greater risk of infections, and would take a longer time to recover from her vulnerable health condition.

The roots of this problem lie in the under-investment on the female child discussed earlier, and the poor nutritional status of women at all times. Thus we need to look beyond pregnancy-specific interventions to prevent anaemia in the long run. Other causes of anaemia are malaria, bacterial infections, blood loss from abortion or delivery or extremely heavy menstruation, and intestinal parasites such as hookworm. Prevention and control of anaemia and its negative consequences for maternal health, calls for a more comprehensive approach than distribution of iron and folic acid tablets during pregnancy, which has been the mainstay of our programme for many decades.

A 1986 community-based ICMR study on pregnancy wastage found that about 8 out of every 100 pregnancies do not end in a live birth, and that if the high mortality of premature births is taken into account, almost 1 in 10 pregnancies may not have a positive outcome.

High rates of pregnancy wastage are both caused by and result in poorer health among women. It also mean that women will try to get pregnant again in order to fulfil their fertility goals; repeated pregnancies in a compromised state of health following a miscarriage or stillbirth seriously harm their health. Moreover, they are likely to inhibit the use of spacing methods before achieving the desired family size or composition. Another important health consequence is infection of the reproductive tract which results from incomplete or missed miscarriages. For these reasons, this is an area that needs to be included as a priority

Because of the *de jure* 'availability' of abortions in public health facilities, there is often an assumption that induced abortions 'are not a problem' in India. This is far from true. Complications resulting from induced abortion by untrained personnel contributes about 20-25% of all maternal deaths. An extensive review of available information on induced abortions in India highlights the following issues [17]

* Despite legalization of abortion, illegal abortions today may outnumber legal MTPs by a ratio as high as 11 to 1
* Incidence of second trimester abortions in India are among the highest in the world. Important reasons for this are sex-selective abortions and late recognition of pregnancy
* Access is often limited due to cost of MTPs (although these are meant to be free), attitude of providers, lack of information to women, and linking MTP provision to acceptance of family planning
* Public health facilities providing abortion services are grossly inadequate. The quality of services also leaves much to be desired.
* There are not enough trained personnel or training institutions.
* Cumbersome licensing procedures, restriction of licence to perform procedures to specialists and doctors alone are factors which further limit access to abortion services.
* Despite the availability of safer procedures such as menstrual regulation and suction, the technique still adopted is D&C, known to have higher complication rates.

Contraceptive services have been provided free of cost by the public sector health services in India, through the National Family Planning Programme. The prevalence of contraceptives has been steadily increasing over the decades, and fertility has significantly declined. As of 1990, 43% of all Indian couples were practising some form of contraception. Since the 1980s fertility decline has been marked, and contraceptive prevalence has increased at about 2% per annum. However, there are considerable variations across the states in fertility levels. The four

11 T K. Sundari Ravindran, Women's Health Situation in a Rural Poor Population in Chengalpattu, Tamil Nadu in T N Krishnan and Monica Das Gupta (eds), *The Health of Women in India*, Oxford University Press, 1995

12 Sample Registration Survey figures for 1991

13. Parul Christian, R Abbi, S Gujral and T Gopaldas, 'At risk status of pregnant women of Panchmahals (Gujarat) and Chandpur (Maharashtra)', *Journal of Health Science* 15, 1989, 85-91

14 P K Shukla, *Nutritional Problems of India* Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi, 1982

15 S Sengupta and A G Gode, 'The study of maternal mortality and morbidity in a North Indian hospital a nine year review', *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 37, 1987, 394-400

16 K Prema, S Neelakumari and B. A. Ramalakshmi, Anaemia and Adverse Obstetric Outcome Nutrition Reports International, 1981, 23

17. Rami Chhabra and S C Nuna, *Abortion in India An Overview* New Delhi, 1994.

larger northern states have a TFR of 5.0; other states combined have a TFR of 3.2. Of these, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have a TFR of 2.0 and 2.2 respectively.[18]

The use of contraceptives by men is, however, negligible and the burden of contraception rests almost exclusively with women. Contraceptive use among women below 30 is merely 16%, as compared to 55% for women aged 30-44. This is not surprising given that sterilization is the method adopted by more than 75% of acceptors. Estimates of unmet need for India are of the order of 20% If women who did not want more children were able to avoid pregnancy, it is estimated that the maternal mortality rate would fall by 40%.[19]

The lack of method choice, limited male involvement, low contraceptive prevalence among younger women, and unmet demand for contraception despite the existence of a nation-wide family planning programme providing free services, has largely been a consequence of a top-down, demographic-target driven programme which depended on incentives and disincentives to 'motivate' acceptors and paid scant attention to the quality of services. The family planning programme has focused singularly on acceptance of terminal methods of contraception, and on bringing about a decline in birth rates at the cost of all else.

Approaches to the provision of contraceptive services which start from women's reproductive rights and health needs, would be characterised by free and informed access to women and men of a wide range of safe and effective contraceptives, backed up with appropriate medical screening in an emotionally supportive setting.

There have been a number of recent studies on the prevalence of reproductive tract infections in women, following the well-known one by R.A. Bang, et al. These show that a significant proportion of women suffer from reproductive tract infections and related morbidity, and several suffer from more than one infection or pathological condition.[20]

Only in the last few years has it been understood that reproductive tract infections and other gynaecological morbidities underlie most of the important reproductive health concerns such as maternal mortality and morbidity, infertility, cervical cancer, perinatal mortality and HIV/AIDS. The most common infections are gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, bacterial vaginosis, HIV, human papilloma virus (HPV; associated with cervical cancer), herpes simplex, trichomoniasis and candidiasis.

Reproductive tract infections consist of both sexually transmitted diseases as well as those transmitted through other means Non-sexual transmission may occur during unsafe deliveries and abortions. Non-adherence to asepsis in gynaecological and obstetric procedures is another common route of non-sexual transmission. Incomplete miscarriages could be another source of infection. Some infections are the result of a preponderance of bacteria normally present in the lower genital tract. The role of poor menstrual hygiene, and of transmission through foreign bodies inserted into the vagina (for douching and so on) is not clear.

Existing gynaecological conditions such as prolapse of the uterus, urinary incontinence and vesico-vaginal fistula – all sequelae of complicated deliveries, often lead to the chronic presence of RTIs, which can only be cured if the root cause is addressed.

RTIs have several adverse reproductive health consequences. When a woman with an RTI has an abortion or a delivery, her chances of contracting an infection postpartum are greatly enhanced. Postpartum infection, it may be remembered, is among the two leading causes of maternal mortality in India. RTIs also adversely affect foetal outcomes and increase risk of foetal and neonatal mortality. The high rates of pregnancy wastage mentioned earlier could in some settings be the consequence of untreated RTI in the woman. The ascent of lower reproductive tract infections into the fallopian tubes causes a number of serious, often asymptomatic, problems commonly known by the name Pelvic Inflammatory Diseases (PID). Infections of the upper tract may lead to blocking of the tubes, resulting in infertility, and chronic pelvic pain that women often silently suffer. RTIs and STDs also affect susceptibility to and infectivity of the HIV virus. The sexually transmitted HPV is known to be associated with the development of cervical cancer.

The presence of RTIs not only increases risk of maternal and perinatal mortality and morbidity, it could also affect morbidity associated with contraception In the Indian context, where no prior screening for RTIs is done before IUD insertion, there is a high chance that an existing lower RTI ascends to the upper tract at the time of insertion, causing pelvic inflammatory diseases.

Given the diverse routes of transmission and associated factors, the prevention and control of RTIs implies going back to the basics: improving access to and quality of maternal health care and of abortion and contraceptive services, and improving women's nutritional and general health status.

It is argued that treatment and control of RTIs can be added on as a component of the current FP programme, because women at risk of pregnancy and those at

18. Family Welfare Year Book, Department of Family Welfare, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi, 1991

19. George Ascadi and Gwendolyn Johnson-Ascadi, Safe Motherhood in South Asia socio-cultural and demographic aspects of maternal health. Background paper, Safe Motherhood South Asia Conference, Lahore, 1990

20 For example, R A Bang, et al , 'High prevalence of gynaecological diseases in rural Indian women', *The Lancet*, 14 January 1989, 85-88, P R Dutt, et al , Gandhigram, in A R Omran and C C Stanley (eds), *Family Formation Patterns and Health An International Collaborative Study in India, Iran, Lebanon, Philippines and Turkey* World Health Organization, Geneva, 1976, 337-344 More recent works include J C Bhatia and J Cleland, 'Self-reported symptoms of gynaecological morbidity and their treatment in South India', *Studies in Family Planning* 26(4), 203-216, and BCC, CINI, SEWA-Rural and Streehitakarini, Prevalence of clinically detectable gynaecological morbidity in India: results from four community-based studies. Unpublished research report, 1995

risk of contracting an RTI are both drawn from the same population sub-group of sexually active women This is a fallacious argument Not all RTIs are sexually transmitted, and can affect women of all age groups, sexually active or otherwise, post menarche to menopause. But an even greater danger lies in excluding large numbers of Indian women, who are barely 30-35 years and already sterilized, from such a programme. They run a high risk of STDs as they are unlikely to use condoms to protect themselves from infection, and are not part of the clientele of FP services having already accepted a permanent method of contraception.

Although a part of the category RTIs/STDs, it is important to highlight HIV/AIDS separately because of its fatal consequences, and the growing evidence of the central role of heterosexual transmission of this infection.

The number of HIV positive men and women in the country as well as that of those suffering from AIDS, has been a subject of much controversy. Some of the earlier estimates made by WHO (1.6 million HIV positive cases in 1993) are way above figures from the National AIDS Control Organisation The distribution of HIV positive persons as well as those suffering from AIDS varies considerably across states, but it is unclear how much of this is an artifact of differences in testing facilities and greater utilisation of facilities, and to what extent they reflect actual trends.

Despite limitations of available data, it is clear that we can not ignore the HIV/AIDS pandemic when planning reproductive health interventions. The emergence of HIV/AIDS makes it imperative to take into account the need for infection prevention together with pregnancy prevention in contraception A continuing preoccupation with permanent and effective methods of contraception that will reduce birth rates, through the lack of priority accorded to condom use, endanger women by exposing them to a high risk of HIV infection through unprotected (that is, without condom) sex.

The adherence to minimum standards in surgical and medical care to prevent infection, and improvement of quality of care, both issues in themselves, also need urgent attention.

The relationship between women's reproductive rights and their reproductive health is perhaps best exemplified in the case of HIV/AIDS infection. For women to be able to insist on safer sexual practices by their partners, and on condom use, requires that they have the power and confidence to do so. Only through changing sexual behaviour can we hope to make a dent in the control of this rapidly spreading infection.

It is unfortunate under the circumstances that we have in India a vertical HIV/AIDS programme that runs parallel to, and in isolation from, other health services including MCP/FP, and the limited range of reproductive health services available in referral facilities. Even more distressing is that programmatic interventions have tended to identify and focus on so-called 'high risk' groups such as commercial sex workers and truck drivers, leaving unattended the partners of infected men who are equally at risk.

Violence against women has only recently come to be acknowledged as a reproductive health issue meriting serious attention Sexual abuse can directly lead to unwanted pregnancy through rape or inability to negotiate contraceptive use. Women may also be reluctant to raise the issue of contraception for fear of being beaten or accused of infidelity. Those living with physically abusive partners are especially helpless against coercive sex, including incest and rape, making women vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases

Battery during pregnancy has been identified as especially dangerous for the health of the woman and her unborn child It causes increased risk of pregnancy complications, miscarriage, and low birth weight babies. In Matlab Thana, homicide or suicide motivated by stigma over rape, unwed pregnancy, beatings or dowry accounted for 6% of all maternal deaths between 1976 and 1986 Among all deaths of women aged 15-44, intentional injury accounts for 12 3%, with deaths due to homicide and suicide outnumbering those from abortions.[21]

Available studies from India, though few in number, indicate that domestic violence is an important problem for women. A study of suicides committed in Delhi in one year, 46% were males, 54% females. Marital discord and ill-treatment by husbands was stated as the most common precipitating factor In another study of suicides in 1978, the Madras police department found the peak age of suicide among women to be 15-20; two-thirds of them were married, and maladjustment with an alcoholic or drug-addict husband was the principal cause In yet another study from Daspur, peak ages for suicide among women were 15-24 years, and 'quarrel with spouse' a common precipitating factor.[22]

Juxtaposing this against the reported cause of death, which shows that accidents and injuries are the most important cause of death in the 15-24 age group (34% of all deaths), it appears that violence against women could be an important factor influencing their reproductive health in the Indian context

These concerns about reproductive health are a product of the social milieu, and need more than medical solutions It is futile to attempt to deal with these adequately and with any measure of success by merely changing the package of services offered Adding a few components to the existing 'family planning programme' will not transform it into a 'reproductive health programme' that respects women's reproductive rights

The following are some basic principles which should guide the formulation of reproductive health programmes:
(i) adopting a public health approach to reproductive health care, within the con-

21 Vincent Fauveau and Therese Blanchet, 'Deaths from injuries and induced abortion among rural Bangladeshi women', *Social Science and Medicine* 29(9). 1989, 1121-28

22 As quoted in Frieda Paltiel, 'Women and mental health, a post Nairobi perspective', *World Health Statistics Quarterly* 40, 233-66

text of primary health care. In other words, reproductive health needs are a subset of women's broader health needs, and must be approached as such There is no way one can improve women's reproductive health in isolation from their overall well-being.

(ii) a commitment to put in place a comprehensive and integrated programme rather than vertical interventions. For women, one reproductive health problem feeds into another A vertical HIV/AIDS programme running parallel to one for MCP/FP or reproductive health is typical of a fragmented vertical approach.

(iii) planning from bottom-up, relying on holistic rather than on technical solutions;

(iv) paying attention to basics: working towards the effective use of existing resources, (for example, equipping PHCs with personnel and resources necessary to make them functional), eliminating wastage and corruption;

(v) putting in place accountability mechanisms that make possible regular client feedback, and keep the programme tuned to the needs of women (and men). More importantly, ensure that abuses will not go unquestioned; and

(vi) improving and expanding access to high-quality services.

Where the principles of gender equity are concerned, we need to:

(a) Pursue approaches which promote women's empowerment, by enhancing their information base, and create enabling conditions to make possible better self-care and prevention and management of reproductive and other health problems,

(b) view women's reproductive health concerns within the context of their living and working conditions, and seek solutions aimed at primary prevention – that is, social policies that would enhance their well-being;

(c) adopt a life-cycle approach to reproductive health needs, starting from menarche and continuing post-menopause, instead of narrowly focusing on the pregnant woman and the family planning adopter;

(d) promote equitable and mutually respectful gender relations;

(e) increase, for example, reproductive choice especially for women;

(f) increase male responsibility in reproductive health, and

(g) discourage discriminatory and harmful practices including infanticide, prenatal sex selection, discrimination in food allocation, health care and child marriage.

Reproductive health programmes should locate reproductive health issues in the context of gender power inequalities, and work in collaboration with programmes for the empowerment of women: literacy programmes, employment guarantee programmes, income generation activities, Mahila Mandals or Mahila Swasthya Samitis. Committees comprising of representatives of the health sector, the local government (*panchayat* and *zila parishads*), departments of government that work on various aspects of women's empowerment, and NGOs and women's organizations need to be set up at the district and panchayat levels to identify local priorities and to design comprehensive interventions.

The active participation of empowered women should be the lynchpin of a reproductive health programme. To this end, efforts at the local level should be to involve women in spelling out their health needs; to equip them with information and skills that would help them initiate self-care at home and seek appropriate help when needed; to become informed and discerning users of health services by insisting on adequate standards of care; and to seek solutions beyond the health care system when necessary

Such an approach may unleash demand for a wide range of services from the public health and other social sectors. The health sector will have to commit more resources to developing infrastructure and ensuring the regular functioning of health facilities, and also invest on improving both the range and the quality of services offered. Training of staff in new skills and providing quality care is a key element in making this possible. Another important area is gender sensitization of staff in the health and other social sectors. Taking women's needs and concerns seriously will have to become the norm, and not an exception.

Where the health sector is concerned, this implies a radical departure from current strategies and the mind-set that has governed the MCP/FP programme for two decades. Fundamental changes will be needed in designing and implementation of health sector interventions and programmes to 'enable' and 'empower' women. These are not entirely new concepts, only 'engendered' versions of 'people's participation' upheld by the Primary Health Care approach. The government's recent announcement to do away with family planning 'targets', marks a promising beginning There is, however, a long road ahead.

Even while we plan enthusiastically for a reproductive health programme, we cannot afford to lose sight of the larger issues that work against women's reproductive health. Social policies that indirectly result in accentuation of gender inequities – the cut in expenditures on social welfare programmes is an example – the social and economic consequences to women of structural adjustment programmes and economic liberalisation are not consistent with a commitment to promotion of reproductive health.

While demanding new policy initiatives to address the pervasive gender inequities in our society we must guard against regression. There is a real danger that in the process of moving from rhetoric to action, reproductive health may be reduced to a series of medical concerns with correspondingly medical solutions: a neatly packaged deal, consisting of 'screening pregnant women for syphilis, prophylaxis for ophthalmia neonatorum and RTI screening before IUD insertions'. Another danger is that a new emphasis on 'reproductive health' by international and bilateral donor agencies will result in a flood of resources for reproductive health, while basic services and primary health care remain under-financed. Were this to happen, it would be the very antithesis of what women world-wide have struggled for

New indicators

S RAMASUNDARAM

INDIA'S family welfare programme is said to be the oldest government sponsored fertility reduction programme in the world. With rapid fertility reduction as its goal, the programme depended mainly on adoption of contraception by couples in the reproductive age groups. Therefore, it was logical that the level of acceptance of the four major contraceptive methods – sterilizations (male or female), IUDs, oral pills and condoms – was taken as the indicator to measure the performance of the programme.

Since the mid-1960s, when the family planning programme in India was intensified, numerical targets for each contraceptive method were worked out by statisticians at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in the Government of India (GOI) at Delhi. These numbers were decided, keeping in view the ultimate goal of reducing the crude birth rate to a specific level within a specific time.

These national level targets were apportioned among states and then among districts. Finally, individual field staff of several government departments were given annual and monthly targets for each contraceptive method. Usually, field staff from the health department were given targets under all contraceptive methods while those from other departments, like revenue or rural development, were given only sterilization targets. These were closely monitored by the senior officers in each department (especially the district collectors), in view of the high priority given to family planning over the past 30 years. A cash reward system for states encouraged inflation of performance figures in the mid-1980s and this was given up by the late 1980s.

While the above system was implemented uniformly all over India, the results in terms of the declines in birth rate differed from state to state. By the end of the 1980s, Kerala had reached replacement level fertility and Tamil Nadu was close to it. On the other hand, large states like U.P., Bihar, M.P. and Rajasthan had comparatively high infant mortality and birth rates Clearly, the use of numerical targets for contraceptive methods as indicators did not help in measuring the success of the programme. The annual Sample Registration Surveys (SRS), conducted by the Registrar General of India and the more elaborate National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) of 1992-93, commissioned by GOI and funded by USAID, clearly show the vast differences among Indian states in terms of health and demographic indicators

In the early 1990s efforts to reform the target-based programme were initiated in Tamil Nadu which demonstrated that removal of the numerical targets did not result in a fall in the acceptance of contraceptive methods by couples. Around the same time, the strong correlation between ante-natal care, institutional delivery, infant mortality and fertility was articulated.

The World Bank funded India Population Project-5 in Tamil Nadu, implemented from 1989, was one of the earliest programmes in India where the

* The views expressed in this paper are the author's and do not constitute an official statement of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

major goals were not based on contraceptive methods. Instead, they were set in terms of ante-natal registration and care, institutional delivery, post-natal care and immunization of the child Yet birth rates in the project areas declined sharply – mainly due to an increase in the proportion of institutional deliveries, decline in the infant mortality levels and a steady increase in contraceptive acceptance.

The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 adopted the reproductive health of women as an important objective, rather than reducing population growth through contraception. All the above factors set the right climate for a complete overhaul of India's family welfare programme with a new set of indicators and a target-free approach during the years 1995 and 1996.

By mid-1995, family welfare reform in Tamil Nadu had resulted in the abolition of all 'top-down' targets for contraceptive methods. Health workers were asked to set their own targets for a number of maternal and child health (MCH) activities and contraceptive methods. The targets followed the chronological sequence of pregnancy, childbirth and child care: ante-natal registration, identifying high-risk mothers, ante-natal visits, immunization for the mother, institutional delivery, post-natal care, promotion of breast-feeding, immunization for the child, contraception for spacing or termination and safe abortion.

Not all these services are provided by the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) in the village – caesarean sections, sterilizations or abortions are performed only by doctors in a hospital. But the ANM was expected to guide the mother in seeking these services when she needed them.

This major step in assessing an ANM's work only on the basis of services actually provided by her was helped by the fact that GOI did not fix any contraceptive targets for Tamil Nadu during 1995-96. While Kerala was the only other target-free state, one or two districts in each state were freed from targets during 1995-96.

The results of the target-free programme with alternative indicators from Tamil Nadu were encouraging. The GOI set up a small committee in February 1996 to study the various target-free approaches and to recommend a set of alternative indicators for nation-wide implementation. The committee studied the experiences of different states, especially Tamil Nadu, in moving away from contraceptive targets towards a broader set of maternal and child health indicators. Extensive discussions were held with ANMs associations. A field visit to a Primary Health Centre (PHC) in Tamil Nadu and discussions with the ANMs there helped in understanding the field conditions and the views of the workers

The recommendations of the committee were presented at a workshop in Delhi convened by the Department of Family Welfare, GOI, in March 1996 . Senior officials of the central and state governments and representatives of international donor agencies were present. More importantly, two female health workers each from Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan participated as well. This enabled other participants to hear first hand the views of field workers on the target-free system and the alternative set of indicators.

There were heated debates about the need to report the numbers of acceptors of the different contraceptive methods, even if the targets were now set by the ANMS themselves and were not imposed from above In late March 1996, there was another workshop at Ahmedabad, organized by Health Watch, to solicit the views of NGOs on the proposed alternative set of indicators.

In April 1996, at a meeting of the state health secretaries convened by GOI at Delhi, the target-free approach to family welfare was formally adopted all over India. A smaller group of health secretaries went into the recommendations of the committee and came up with detailed reporting formats and guidelines for the various indicators and activities at the sub-centre and PHC levels. These were finally put together in the form of a manual and distributed to all the states and districts by May 1996 This process, lasting over a year, is the first serious attempt to re-orient India's family welfare programme in a significant manner in over 30 years. Three senior officials in the Department of Family Welfare, GOI, initiated and sustained this process to its successful culmination. J. C. Pant, Secretary, Adarsh Misra and K. S. Sugathan, joint secretaries.

The new indicators, according to the manual, fall in three distinct categories – to measure accessibility, quality and impact. In each of the three categories, there are six major sub-groups: ante-natal care, intra-natal care, post-natal care, immunization, family planning and surveillance of diseases. (For indicators of evaluation of sub-centres, see the manual on target free approach in family welfare programme, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Delhi, 1996.) An attempt is made to discuss some of these indicators here.

Ante-natal Care: Under this head, one of the accessibility indicators is the percentage of ante-natal sessions held as planned The corresponding quality indicator is the percentage of ante-natal mothers who were visited five times by the ANM during the pregnancy period. The impact indicator is the maternal-mortality ratio.

Intra-natal Care: While one accessibility indicator is the percentage of sub-centres with disposable delivery kits and infant weighing machines, the quality indicators are deliveries at sub-centres and deliveries conducted by ANMs or TBAs. Some of the impact indicators are obstetric mortality and new-natal mortality rate.

Post-natal Care: Percentage of post-natal mothers who received three post-natal visits is one of the quality indicators under this category. Prevalence of post-natal maternal morbidity is one of the impact indicators.

Family planning: This section generated considerable discussion before being finalized. Under the accessibility indicators are listed the percentage of ANMs without the needed skills, equipment and supplies. The percentage of

couples offered choice, followed up and complicated cases referred, are some of the quality indicators. The prevalence of terminal and spacing methods are among the impact indicators.

Surveillance of Diseases: Percentage of ANMs with requisite skills and supplies are the accessibility indicators. Percentage of couples screened and counselled for RTIs/STDs and percentage of fully immunized children are the major quality indicators. Some of the impact indicators are: prevalence of RTIs and STDs and the prevalence of vaccine preventable diseases.

In three important aspects, the new indicators differ remarkably from the 'old' family planning indicators:

(*i*) For the first time, the responsibility to post ANMs and to equip her with skills and facilities is placed on the government and senior health administrators. Earlier, the ANM was expected to provide all services whether or not she had the skills and supplies.

(*ii*) In the earlier version of the family planning programme, the ANM was assessed mainly on a service that she never provided – namely, sterilization. Now, under the category of quality indicators, her performance is measured only on the basis of services actually provided. This realistic goal-setting and work-scheduling will help in the ANM performing to her full potential Further, the process of goal-setting involves the ANM as an active member of the team rather than as a lowly subordinate in the health system.

(*iii*) The new indicators focus on the needs of the people, as reflected in most of the impact indicators. The former target system was designed to suit the needs of the government, namely, to reduce the birth rate as quickly as possible However, experience shows that a people-oriented health care service will also result in declines in fertility.

The manual on target-free approach does not stop with merely prescribing alternative indicators; it goes further and gives procedures for drawing up subcentre level and PHC level plans, improving the quality of care, training of staff, IEC programmes and detailed reporting formats for each of these.

Some people have questioned the need for such a detailed manual for the whole country, since this may not allow flexibility for individual states. But within the broad framework, states can devise their own detailed plans. The GOI has been supportive of such efforts in Tamil Nadu and elsewhere in the recent past.

However, there are some important factors that can hamper the new strategy, despite its realistic and people-centred approach. The PHC medical officer's involvement is an essential requirement for the success of health programmes in the rural areas, whatever the approach. In most states, including Tamil Nadu, absenteeism among PHC doctors is widespread. The present government in Tamil Nadu has declared it as a priority to improve the situation. But given the strong doctors associations, this will not be an easy task

Similarly, a large number of male workers have been doing little work after their merger into a single cadre of multipurpose health workers in the mid-1980s. While this is a waste of manpower and scarce government funds, the ANMs perceive themselves as being targeted for all the work while the male workers hardly do anything. This situation needs to be addressed. Moreover, unless health care is among the top priorities of a state government, there unlikely to be sustained interest in the new approach which is essential for its successful implementation. It was much easier to implement and monitor the old bureaucratic approach to the programme.

To sum up, the target-free approach has given a unique opportunity to state governments, health administrators and field functionaries to design and implement a people-oriented and comprehensive family welfare programme Further, the inclusion of screening and counselling of couples for RTI/STDs is a major step towards controlling the HIV/AIDS pandemic. How well this opportunity is utilized will differ from state to state and will need to be assessed after a couple of years to determine its efficacy.

Interview

A conversation between Health Minister **Saleem I. Shervani** and **Saroj Pachauri** of the Population Council of India.

India has moved towards operationalizing the ICPD agenda formalized in Cairo. We would like you to reflect upon the shift in paradigm, reconceptualize the Reproductive and Child Health issue and share with us the new thinking about the population problem.

The way I perceive it, many problems we face today relate to population issues. Though we could make progress with better facilities, such as more industries or hospitals or better roads, this progress is retarded if population growth remains unchecked.

I had certain reservations when this ministry was handed over to me. The issues were relatively new, and I am no doctor, but soon I realized that much needs to be done. Several health programmes exist but they have to be more effective and better implemented. Moreover, for the success of a critical and emotional movement, such as checking population growth, programme planning cannot be done from air-conditioned rooms. An effort has to be made to reach the grassroots to understand the rationale behind people's desire for large families. Once we understand this, we have to work backwards and formulate effective plans. I strongly believe this has to be a people's movement. We have to reach out to them emotionally. Take a simple example: we know people love their children and would like to do their best for them. Therefore, we have to convince them with specifically tailored messages convincing them that they may not be able to provide the best for their third child in terms of education, job prospects or even basic health needs The message to the people has to be simple, consistent and appealing. That is the idea I'm trying to generate – a kind of revised thinking; my team is working on it....

This message must reach the people So when I advertise, I must be able to buy prime time on Doordarshan rather than wait for them to give a slot when viewership is negligible. If Chandrakanta or Krishna are the most popular serials, I'll advertise then to ensure the message reaches the people. Advertising at 6 a.m is no help.

Viewership will be certainly be low at that hour of day.

Absolutely. There has been a fair amount of improvement since our population programme came into being. We have been able to avoid nearly 150 million births, the infant mortality rate is down, life-spans have increased. These are encouraging results. The most positive aspect of the programme is that it is voluntary in nature and there is no coercion. We hope such a programme will carry people along with it. To me, that will be the key to its ultimate success.

That fits right into the paradigm shift, our national agenda of the Panchayat's involvement and that of the people's participation at the grassroots level.

After negotiations with the World Bank, we received Rs. 6 billion as part of the first phase. These will be used to upgrade the Andhra state health system, public health centres and community health centres. We received Rs. 16 billion in the second phase for Karnataka, Punjab and West Bengal. Currently, we are in the process of negotiating the third phase where we expect Rs. 20 billion – to be utilized for U.P., M.P., Bihar and Orissa.

The difficult states?

Yes, the difficult states. The rationale behind upgrading the health systems is to provide the poor with access to health facilities comparable to that in towns and cities. Once health facilities are available and accessible and provide a certain quality of services, health standards will improve. We also plan to computerize the entire programme for better monitoring. The P.M. has introduced a system of health insurance for the poor in his budget which will go a long way.

We want to create another fund with a large corpus of a few hundred million to build a system where the district doctor can refer patients for major surgeries such as cancer and heart transplant. These would be done for free.

So we envisage an upgraded health system to take care of the core health needs of our people.

A public health system responsive to the needs of the people will certainly be a welcome advance. But what about places that don't have these facilities and are poorly equipped? Even where facilities exist they remain unutilized because the system is not responsive to the needs of the people.

I agree with you. There are some ridiculous situations. For instance, in Allahabad there is a hospital which has a generator but no budget for diesel! Plans must be made in totality: not ones that decide randomly to put generators in place without providing a budget for diesel as well. We also need closer coordination between the centre and states. In fact, I plan to call a meeting of the state health ministers to establish a system of accountability.

I admit we have a long way to go but there is a desire to do things, and do them correctly. The entire process has to take off. But we are still at the planning stage and will be in better position to discuss details and the implementation of the ICPD only after the winter session of the Parliament.

NGOs in the time of globalisation

VIMALA RAMACHANDRAN

IN THE last two years voluntary organisations working in the area of health and women's groups have attempted to come to grips with the concept of 'Reproductive Health'. This new-found enthusiasm has been criticised by a wide range of social activist groups who see it as yet another donor driven agenda. Discussions on the appropriateness of a vertical programme that deflects attention from primary health has renewed the debate on whether voluntary organisations really voluntary and to what extent non-government organisations (NGOs) are autonomous in setting their own priorities and agenda in the area of health and family planning – especially in an era of globalisation and liberalisation.

For almost five decades 'health for all' has been an elusive goal. Various permutations and combinations were tried by the government yet – like primary education – delivering quality primary health care facilities to the people has remained at the level of slogans and rhetoric. Technically almost 85%[1] of our population is covered by a Primary Health Centre (PHC); doctors are posted in rural areas; medicines are supplied to all PHCs and referral services are available. On paper, the system was supposed to work.

But this is where the comparison with the education sector ends. Unlike primary education, the health delivery system in India has been dominated by demographic goals – almost overshadowing the primary agenda of the government. For 40 years our system was driven by method-specific sterilisation targets – unlike almost all the other social sectors – and the government machinery spared no effort to achieve them. On this one point the entire health delivery system worked – from the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) to the Medical Officer – every one had to achieve targets set by the state.

The political-administrative will to achieve targets was evident down the line: chief secretaries had family planning (FP) targets on their monthly check-list, district magistrates made it a point to ensure achievement and promotions and other avenues of professional advancement were linked to FP targets. It was apparent to one and all that given political and administrative will, the government system performs.

This inherent contradiction within the health care system has left a strong impact on the voluntary sector. Voluntary organisations were split across the middle – between those who supported and participated in the government's FP programme and those who were open critics of the coercive system Donors operating in India were also categorised according to their role in encouraging or promoting India's demographic goals,

1. Table 4, Human Development Report, UNDP, 1996

and those who kept a safe distance from it or those who saw it as a violation of basic human rights. Therefore, voluntary organisations were not just split according to their public position on FP but also on their relationship with donors who were publicly identified with demographic goals. Politics among the NGOs and networking between groups was thus greatly influenced by India's FP programme and intention, encouragement and support for it. This prompted a commentator to observe that 'The legitimacy of the NGO is no longer based upon values and voluntarism but on its contract to a legitimate agency'.[2]

Since the mid '70s women's organisations, social activist groups, radical political parties and community based organisations have raised their voice against the contradictory positions taken by government on population and family planning. At one level, at the Bucharest conference, India touted the slogan – 'development is the best contraceptive'. At another level, back home, the government intensified its efforts to control population growth. The darkest period was during the Emergency (1975-77) when excesses committed in the programme brought the government down. After a brief lull, the renamed (not revamped) Family Welfare Programme came back with a bang – with one significant difference. Women were now the target – male sterilisation had proved politically volatile. Tubectomy camps, laproscopy techniques coupled with incentives and disincentives became the government's one point programme and the entire might of the administration was geared towards achieving targets. This approach continued through the '80s.

The first glimmer of doubt was expressed by the Planning Commission in its approach paper to the eighth plan. It stated, 'in spite of massive efforts in the form of budgetary support and infrastructure development, the performance of the family welfare programme has not been commensurate with inputs. Right from the beginning the achievement of the set of goals has been unsatisfactory, resulting in the resetting of targets...: While the seventh plan targets of achieving CPR of 42% was achieved, this was not matched by commensurate decline in the birth rate, possibly because of improper selection of cases.... Containment of population is not merely a function of couple protection or contraception but is directly correlated with female literacy, age of marriage of the girls, status of women in the community, IMR, quality and outreach of health and family planning services and other socio-economic parameters....The Family Welfare Programme has essentially remained a uni-sector programme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare....(it) has also suffered on account of centralised planning and target setting from the top.... Monitoring mechanism under the programme has been reduced to a routine target reporting exercise incapable of identifying roadblocks and applying timely correctives.'

Community based groups, social activists and women's organisations intensified their public protest against the family welfare programme. Almost all made it a point to distance themselves from it. Activists in the women's movement and women's organisation critiqued the programme from the outside. By the early '90s this sharpened – so much so that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare started looking upon women's groups as adversaries. Women's groups agitated against human rights violations in the form of family planning, harmful technologies and the abysmal quality of health care services. Women's development programmes within the government, like the WDP Rajasthan and Mahila Samakhya, made conscious efforts to not only distance themselves from family planning but also actively campaigned for the woman's right to make her own decisions and her right to dignity.

Where did all this lead her to? Right through the '80s and in the first half of the '90s, there was little dialogue between the two constituencies of family planning *wallahs* and women's groups. As a result voluntary organisations, demographers part of the population lobby and family planning associations were identified with the establishment. Government propaganda – lessons in school textbooks, media stories about the population bomb, international advocacy for reduction in population growth – created a situation whereby the two extreme positions received public attention: one which stated that population must be controlled at any cost as it is the root cause of poverty and the other which argued that high population growth rate is a symptom of poverty, ill-health and lack of social security. Middle-of-the-roaders who argued for a more nuanced and balanced view of the population-poverty linkages were either silent or found their advocacy ineffective.

By the middle of the '90s an appreciable softening among the population hardliners became evident. Many decades of pumping money into contraceptives and sterilisation had not yielded desired results. Evidence from several poor countries demonstrated that human development indicators are not necessarily correlated with economic prosperity. Quality primary health care, maternal and child survival programmes, good sanitation and primary education can turn the tide. When infant mortality decreases and people feel assured about the survival of their children, family size begins to decline. Globally, the efforts to develop human development indicators and the ranking of countries according to quality of life forced demographers and population control *wallahs* to rethink. The environment question and the carrying capacity of the planet also pointed towards consumption patterns among the rich and poor across the world as also within countries. All these effectively diffused the population bomb.

In India, some women's organisations, social activists, researchers and officials recognised the historical opportunity. By 1993 it was so evident that a significant section of policy-makers and

2. Edwards and Hulme, 'Too close for comfort? The impact of official aid on non-governmental organisations', *World Development* 24(6), 1996

administrators within government articulated the need to overhaul the family welfare programme. Target fatigue had set in. A draft note for dis-cussion among Secretaries to Government of India made the round in the early '90s. Some senior civil servants reached out to talk to women activists. Preparatory activities for the Cairo conference provided a glimmer of hope. Intensive lobbying at the national level at a time when issues of population, poverty and development were being reopened globally, could bring about change. There was considerable evidence of internal debate between women's health advocates and population control lobbies within international organisations. Reproductive rights and reproductive health became central to the debate.

Within India, efforts to bring together women's groups, advocates of primary health care, demographers, family planning groups, environmentalists and other concerned activists started in 1993. The initial reaction was one of mutual suspicion. Some women's groups refused to coordinate regional consultations if they were funded and supported by donor agencies known for their 'population control' agenda while others refused to come together with 'family planning wallahs'. The more establishment friendly groups were apprehensive about sharing a platform with women activists calling them shrill and unreasonable. Many civil servants expressed cynicism about the success of efforts to initiate dialogue between traditional adversaries. In short, many key players felt it was a waste of time and effort.

With hesitation and apprehension the first group of people met to talk about the Cairo Draft Programme of Action and its relevance for India. This meeting turned into a forum to ventilate feelings about the family planning programme and the Cairo document was barely touched! At one meeting the interlinkages between population, development, poverty, and so on, were not even addressed and the discussion only centred around the immediate health problems of the people. At the other end of the spectrum, another meeting turned into a vitriolic attack on India's population control policy. In all, 18 meetings were organised by one group as preparatory activities for the ICPD conference. Simultaneously, women's groups in different parts of the country organised their own meetings to talk about the Cairo agenda and whether it had any relevance to India. Existing health networks like Medico Friends Circle and the Voluntary Health Association of India initiated their own consultative process.

The national and international media – especially the electronic media – played up the abortion issue. Cairo promised to be a grand entertainer. Yet, despite the skewed publicity and sensational stories, the Cairo conference became a turning point. The entire debate centred around woman's control over her own body, her right to say 'no' and 'enough'. Abortion, invasive contraceptive technologies, male responsibility, right to be treated with respect and dignity, rights of people within unconventional relationships, family reunification rights, forced migration – all these issues turned Cairo into a women's conference.

Reproductive health emerged as the new panacea for all problems. Demographers, family planning service providers, women's organisations, advocates of women's health, donor agencies and the government saw in the phrase 'Reproductive Health' an opportunity to do what they wanted – without attracting too much attention:

* Government saw in reproductive health a new label, a new slogan to merge safe motherhood programme with family planning – and add Reproductive Tract Infection and STDs into the mixture.
* Some donor agencies saw this as a good opportunity to call for a more decentralised effort to integrate maternal and child health with some additions like sexually transmitted diseases and spacing methods. Other donors saw this as an opportunity to step up contraceptive services towards accelerating fertility decline, without the stigma of the earlier FP programme
* Family planning service providers saw it as an opportunity to continue doing what they have been, after adding some women's sexual health issues – RTIs and STDs;
* Women activists saw in reproductive health an entry point to bring centre-stage issues of women's status, autonomy, sexuality, violence and human rights.
* Women's health advocates saw a flicker of hope of moving away from the dominant perception of women as baby producing machines to human beings who go through a life-cycle of deprivation and ill-health.
* Health groups saw this as yet another vertical programme that deflected attention from holistic, good quality, primary health care. Yet they were pleased that women's health would at last get the attention it merited.
* Adult educators saw a great entry point to promote education of adolescents; and
* The HIV/AIDS lobby was pleased that sexuality and sexual health would finally receive attention.

Almost everyone felt they had something special and new in this catch-all phrase. Most importantly, it provided the much needed space to talk about sex, sexuality, male responsibility, public and private behaviour, autonomy, violence and a host of related issues. It could mean different things to different people and that is the trap! The word 'empowerment' lost its meaning after it was popularised in the development world. It soon replaced words like enable, develop, increase, enhance, aware and so on. One poster screamed: 'Empowering women to breast-feed!!!!' – an irony in India where the majority of women not only breast-feed but, in the absence of food, mothers continue breast-feeding well after the required period, often harming their own health.

NGOs working across the country had to come to terms with yet another programmatic focus that was well-funded. Not all groups working on health were pleased with the new development. A few had pioneered work in the area and were already involved in women's

health issues – including sexual health. Some others, working among women, immediately related to the new concept – it was a natural extension of their work which could also attract funds. Such groups are few and far between. One health group working on reproductive health for almost five years – even when it was not fashionable – commented that the new slogan distorted the concept. Anything from traditional FP services to awareness programmes were given a new label. She wondered whether the concept of a life-cycle approach to women's health would ever gain legitimacy. 'Like the word empowerment – reproductive health will soon become a empty catch-all phrase that really means nothing.'

A vast majority of NGOs who were not involved in the family planning debate or in women's health issues were caught unawares. Many of them recognised the importance of keeping in step with global developmental agendas. As a result, we now have groups frantically trying to contact people who can help them adjust their programmes to the new agenda. In a recent meeting of NGOs working in the area of health and family planning, the organisers were surprised at the enthusiasm of many new NGOs who reached out from different corners of the state requesting invitations. A significant number of them were practising doctors or retired civil servants who were planning to enter the arena.

The last 20 years have seen unprecedented growth in registered NGOs. Some government and donor assisted programmes in a few states have led to the sudden spurt of NGOs in the health and family planning sector. A significant number are of intermediary agencies involved in training and networking. An equally significant number is diversifying and moving into this field. Family planning, social marketing of contraceptives, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health are the new growth areas in the development sector.[3] This is bound to attract the committed and the opportunists – and as in others areas of the economy, supply will influence demand.

The era of globalisation and liberalisation brought with it new NGO enthusiasts. Disillusionment with the public sector and India's own dismal record in providing quality social services to the poor, prompted liberalisation pundits, donor agencies and banks to champion the cause of the private sector. For almost a decade now NGOs have been seen as the magic bullet that would cut through red-tapism, inefficiency and corruption and reach much-needed health care services, credit, education and so on to the poor. NGOs were seen as being more efficient and closer to the people. In the wake of the Panchayati Raj Act, their role in galvanising 'women power' was the new path to empowerment. At the heart of the matter was the question of cost- effectiveness and outreach. Large sums of money for social sector programmes were to be channelled through NGOs.

What about the government? How do officials and politicians view NGOs? With the exception of a few die-hard NGO advocates, most government officials are apprehensive about viewing NGOs as a magic solution. Given the nature of our political system with its inherent patronage network and loopholes – most officials point out that the non-government sector is not as rosy as it appears While not doubting the integrity and work of some organisations, they generally view NGOs with suspicion. Proximity to powerful people, dependence on foreign funds and the emergence of a large number of bogus organisations have forced attention on the dangers of 'handing over' social services to them. They see 'honest NGOs' as effective partners in 'service delivery' – as agents or contractors of the government who are cost effective. Given the financial crunch, long-term staff liability and infrastructure costs have become a major problem. NGOs are seen as a via-media whose contracts can be terminated with ease. Most government officials express reservation about involving NGOs in policy-making and programme development. They argue that foreign funded NGOs are not 'independent' – they could be the mouth-pieces of their financiers.

It is a rather ironical situation that 'independent' or truly 'voluntary' NGOs are rare. Social movements and membership organisations are 'independent', but most of them are not in the 'development business'. They have played a significant role as advocates for policy change, campaigning against certain projects like big dams. Over the last 50 years the proportion of resources generated by NGOs from the community has gone down significantly and voluntary work has become uncommon. NGOs are almost totally dependent on donors for project grants. Overtly 'political' activities like advocacy, networking, community mobilisation, formation of people's organisations, building pressure groups, are supported as projects. Given the changing international scenario, donor priorities change every few years. NGOs have learnt to adapt to changing international funding priorities, moving when the donors move. With the exception of membership-based organisations and those that mobilise funds from the public, the proportion of foreign funds have gone up by leaps and bounds in the last 20 years. Recalling an old African proverb a commentator observed: 'If you have your hand in another man's pocket, you must move when he moves'.[4]

Despite inherent contradictions and conflicts, working among the poor requires commitment. Salary scales are rather low in most agencies. Bare sub-

3 It may be recalled that the '80s saw a sudden spurt of organisations wanting to work with women, even die-hard male bastions suddenly discovered women. This was a mixed blessing – it gave a tremendous boost to the nascent women's movement, yet at another level women's development and later women's empowerment were trivialised Similarly, the '70s saw a spurt in agencies involved in Adult Education. This, it may be recalled, was triggered by the National Adult Education Programme, an exclusive NGO support scheme of the government Again, like the earlier example, some exceptionally creative work was done but, by and large, the vast majority was of indifferent quality

4 Proverb quoted by Van der Heijden in Edwards and Hulme, *op cit*

sistence wages, long working hours, absence of job security, health care benefits and provident fund coupled with almost no career advancement for field workers and local employees has set this sector apart from the rest of the economy In backward areas the local NGO is often the only employer. There have been innumerable heroic tales about dedicated workers and organisations. Alongside, there have been many incidents of corruption, exploitation, refusal to pay minimum wages, sexual harassment and family control. Over the last 20 years 'development' has become a viable career option. Increasing professionalisation of the sector attracts a new breed of people to it. It has also become a stepping stone to international donor agencies, multilateral banks and the UN system.

The changed environment has encouraged many national and international NGOs to pay competitive salaries and provide a corporate working environment NGOs today span a wide range – from small grassroots groups working in a small area among the people to intermediary agencies operating at a global level. There is little in common between the two, yet they are clubbed together as NGOs. Unfortunately, it is the former – that is, the professionally managed agencies – that are growing. Small groups working in difficult circumstances have had to align themselves with a powerful big brother, an important network, a broker/agent of donors or become the exclusive 'find' of a donor agency.

What is the impact of all this? NGOs today are under tremendous pressure to become service providers over a wide territory. In order to do so, they have to either form networks or expand their scale of operation. Their unique ability to be in touch with the people and respond to their needs is dependent on their proximity to the ground Territorial expansion coupled with diversification into multiple sectors in order to survive frequent change in donor priorities have robbed many NGOs of their unique selling proposition – accountability, quality, cost-effectiveness and closeness to ground realities. They are also prey to the danger of being over-funded As 'success' is measured by size and scale, they gradually become big and hierarchical. The stakes increase rapidly. Having employed so many people, organisational heads are forever busy generating resources to maintain their staff. Power, scale, organisational assets, visibility, take over – organisational heads are increasingly alienated from the people. Finally, they become incapable of working towards genuine 'empowerment' of the people and slip into the role of a service provider.

What comes next? Reflecting on the trap they are in, a respected NGO leader known for his personal commitment and incorruptibility said that the only way out is to encourage the formation of membership based people's organisations (popularly known as community based organisations, or CBOs) that would struggle for justice, equity and genuine empowerment. 'Acquisition of organisational assets, creating infrastructure and staff liability,' he said, 'is a trap. Once you are in it you cannot get out. We are now accountable to donors for every penny we receive All my time is spent filling out innumerable forms, hosting evaluations and reviews. As they change their priorities, we have to learn new buzzwords and submit new proposals. Today every donor wants to support savings and credit or reproductive health. What option do I have? If I do not change with the times, how will I support 200 families who are dependent on my organisation for livelihood. In a backward region like ours, I cannot shrug my responsibility.

'This dependency syndrome was created by us I can personally move out and another colleague could run the show but this will not change anything – the show must go on. We are linked to the global market now – I am no longer an independent player, I am a contractor A development contractor who can either accept and move with the times or opt out My choices have not been widened – they have shrunk. This is globalisation.'

Commenting on the changing nature of NGOs and pulls and pressures faced by them, Edwards and Hulme observed that with the disappearance of voluntarism, NGOs are increasingly being seen as contract agents or as the private sector in the development business. From being partners they are today viewed as contractors and the people whom they serve have been transformed from being a beneficiary to a consumer. NGOs have little choice.

What does this do to accountability systems and internal democracy? Talking about the early years of struggle, most NGO leaders agree that their organisations were far more democratic when they struggled to survive There was a sense of togetherness Many of them sacrificed personal comforts and family life. As organisations grew in size, the personal factor was diluted and gradually the iron law of oligarchy asserted itself Comrades and fellow-travellers (except for the original group) gave way to employees hired for a specific task – it became a job.

The gap between the middle class urban professionals and the field workers increased. Many organisations became extensions of the leader's personality – leading to splits, resignations and expulsions. The leader's ability to mobilise funds, network with donors, government officials and politicians placed him/her above the rest. Survival demanded aggressive networking, publicity and establishing national and international contacts. Gradually, survival became the key issue This was not all. Some organisations became family enterprises, with leadership passing from parent to offspring. Organisational assets, patronage networks and power became an end in itself. Leaders became power centres in themselves – moving out of their area to establish patronage networks in other areas. In the absence of any objective criteria for assessing capabilities, donors started working through such established middlemen

The development world is a microcosm of the society we live in. It mirrors the general decline in the moral fabric of our times. With shrinking resources in

the last 15 years, competition among NGOs became fierce. Accountability, commitment and proximity to the people became a rare quality. Widespread cynicism about NGOs, especially in an era of globalisation, is understandable. Notwithstanding the dismal picture, it is significant to note that despite erosion of fundamental values, there are many organisations and groups that remain steadfast and continue to make a difference.

In the ultimate analysis, development is about people and expanding the range of choices and enhancing their capability to negotiate this hostile world from a position of strength. Change agents and development professionals have the power to make a difference. Recognising this power and using it to the best advantage of the poor and the marginalised makes a true leader humble As Robert Chambers puts it·

> Development professionals have more power to change the world for the better that is normally realised. To grasp and use that power requires questioning conventional concepts and realities, exploring and embracing a new paradigm, adopting a new professionalism, empowering the poor to analyze and express their reality, and then putting that reality first.. .
> Professionals, whether in NGOs, government departments, training institutes and universities or donor agencies, have been slow to see that the fine words of 'partnership', 'ownership' and 'empowerment' by and for the poor, demand institutional change 'by us'. Participation 'by them' will not be sustainable or strong unless we too are participatory 'Ownership' by them means non-ownership by us. Empowerment for them means disempowerment for us. In consequence, management cultures, styles of personal interaction and procedures all have to change.[5]

Change is hard to come by, but the 'alue of the few lotuses that flower and ;row out of the murky pond gives us rea-on to hope and to smile.

Robert Chambers, 'Poverty and livelihoods hose reality counts?' *Environment and Urbanition* 7(1), April 1995

Books

LISTENING TO WOMEN TALK ABOUT THEIR HEALTH: Issues And Evidence From India edited by J. Gittelsohn, M.E. Bentley, P.J. Pelto, M. Nag, S. Pachauri, A.D. Harrison, L.T. Landman. Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1994.

IT IS now widely recognized that family planning and health services must become more responsive to women's needs other than contraception, for the population control agenda to be fulfilled to any significant degree in third world countries. The focus on reproductive health, visualized by its proponents as a widening in the dominant conception of family planning, has been one consequence of this.

A 'rediscovery' of the homily that health and population planners, administrators and service deliverers must know and understand women's perspective on health problems and related issues has been a concurrent process. While the rationale for foregrounding reproductive health as the prime focus for improving women's health and well-being remains controversial, there is no disputing the genuine need for it. The gap between the perspectives of common people/women and planners/administrators/ service deliverers has been repeatedly identified as a reason for failure of official programmes.

The volume under review is an outcome of the efforts of one strand of converts from 'population control' to 'reproductive health'. It is a preliminary communication on a Ford Foundation programme on research about the perceptions of women about various health issues with specific focus on reproductive health. The programme, led by the seven co-editors of the book, (four are faculty members of medical anthropology or social sciences and public health in different universities of the USA; one is the former Programme Officer of the Ford Foundation's New Delhi office and two are researchers with degrees from the John Hopkins University), trained Indian freelance researchers, medical doctors and NGO workers in qualitative research methods through a series of workshops.

The trainees then received funding for research projects on related subjects and the reports from eight such studies form the central chapters of the book. A long preface by J. Barzelatto of the Ford Foundation in New York, and an introduction by S. Pachauri of the Ford Foundation in New Delhi, set the agenda of reproductive health and of 'hearing what women have to say' squarely within population control and development debates. The field studies are summed up in a final chapter where implications for policy and programmes are outlined.

The second chapter provides the reader with an overview of the types of qualitative research methods taught to participants in the programme. It begins by forcefully arguing the case for 'qualitative' research methods in addition to quantitative research. While this research issue is by now fairly settled and the importance of 'qualitative' research widely acknowledged, the manner in which the authors present it, as a novel, 'recent' idea, jars. They have ignored the many studies conducted in India by anthropologists, studying health behaviour as part of their study of overall

social structure and culture of certain sections (M. Marriott, 1955; G. M. Carstairs, 1955 and 1977; K. A. Hasan, 1967, D. Banerji, 1982). Writings on women's health perceptions by NGO activists such as K. Dorairaj (Indian Social Institute); M. Sadgopal (Kishore Bharati) and C. Satyamala (Medico-Friends Circle) merit acknowledgment.

The qualitative methods taught to participants and considered significant by the authors were (*i*) key informant interviewing and (*ii*) focus groups and participatory rural appraisal, followed by data analysis using American computer software. Certainly these techniques are useful tools in studying issues in some depth within a community. However, the approach reflected in the authors' description of methods indicate major shortcomings at both levels – gathering and analyses of data. Qualitative research requires a certain methodological rigour and a set of cross-checking mechanisms whereby the influence of the researcher's own perspective on the issue under investigation is minimized and the world-view of the study group (in this case women of deprived sections) emerges clearly These are missing from the description of methods taught. On the contrary, the rules for ensuring reliability of data and of the conclusions drawn from it seem to have been explicitly flouted.

For instance, the selection of key informants as recommended by the authors may begin the data collection with an inherent bias. Starting with 'nurses, outreach workers, and social workers' as 'excellent key informants' (p.4), it is recommended that they introduce the researcher to 'one or two women in the community they know fairly well, whom they know to be well-informed and willing to talk with outsiders'. The nurse/social worker is generally someone who has become part of the dominant developmental mindset and is alienated from the world-view of the deprived sections. Those with whom they tend to interact most closely in the community are again those who are closest to that perspective. So what we learn from them is what fits the dominant framework, not necessarily what lies in the minds of the majority within that community. In fact, both – this method of approaching the community through service providers and subsequent methods taught as part of 'participatory rural appraisal' (free-listing, pile-sorting, rating and ranking of items) – indicate the basic distance of research planners from the community and their inability to envisage dealing directly with fellow human beings.

The engagement of the researcher with people over a long period in order to 'understand' them in the totality of their life context, as in the classical ethnographic method, has been left out – probably because it is too time consuming in today's computer ruled, dominant professional world-view. However, even direct observation has been reduced to 'structured observations', the structuring obviously being based on the researcher's conceptual frame of reference, not allowing the women's lives and behaviour to be naturally observed. Thus the data collected is likely to reflect this basic bias. Further, without adequate data cross-checking mechanisms and with an explicitly set agenda in the researcher's mind, interpretation of data is bound to compound the influence of the researcher's perspectives.

The studies reported in chapters 3-10 substantiate these fears. For instance, all studies show that 'white discharge' is the most commonly listed gynaecological problem. Also that, in the women's perception, it is linked to 'weakness'. Some studies indicate its links with social perceptions of women's sexuality and promiscuity, with their feelings of guilt and powerlessness. All this can be interpreted to conclude that 'white discharge is the number one health concern of rural women and men'! (p.94)

Not considered anywhere in the book is the fact that all women have 'white discharge' and only in some is it due to any disease process. If perceived as an abnormality, almost all women are likely to report it as a health problem. Secondly, how does one place all the factors associated with it in the frame of female logic? It is perceived as a serious abnormality because of its association with 'weakness' Weakness, in turn, is perceived to be due to the nature of work they do, the less/poor food and to this is added the weakness caused by 'white discharge'. Part of its seriousness, of course, also comes from the experience of serious reproductive tract or pelvic infections in a small number of women. These give credibility to fears about white discharge.

Further, social discrimination and powerlessness is somatised (converted into physical problems) and white discharge is one expression of somatisation. Such an interpretation of the same data turns the focus from the problem of white discharge being primarily a health problem amenable to medical technologies, to a manifestation of deeper social and gender issues which cannot be tackled by the health system alone. This can be extended from white discharge to reproductive health as a whole.

If the Ford Foundation recognizes 'that individuals do not perceive their health needs in isolated categories but rather as part of the circumstances of their whole lives' (p. 18), the data on perceptions about women's health too must be interpreted in the historical and existential context of their lives and their world-view. The methodological research perspectives being propagated by this programme is, however, certainly not consonant with such in-depth and realistic ethnography. Short-cut methods put into the hands of amateurs with little thought to safety precautions can be dangerous.

An apprehension created by reading this book is that instead of being empowering for women, the current focus on reproductive health is likely to be another means of exercising hegemony over the majority of women in countries of the South with an illusion of 'giving them cakes when they have no bread'. Throughout the book there is a jugglery between 'comprehensive health of women' and 'reproductive health' of women as if they are synonymous – 'we should be speaking of not just maternal health but should speak of women's health – women's total reproductive health.' Is this still another instance of foreign funded health ser-

vice research legitimising agendas set by the aid-giving North and the alienated Indian professional experts, similar to that of the '50s and '60s, the consequences of which people are suffering today?

Studying people's (or women's) perceptions becomes a convenient way of providing credibility to the agenda 'because people say so themselves'. Instead of performing their task (that of presenting the 'people's perspective'), the researchers are trapped by a perspective and methodology whereby their findings automatically reinforce the preset agenda, one most conducive for the aid-givers in the international political and economic power game. While people's political representatives in the governance of the state are open to some social control through democratic structures, such research programmes are free of any such people's control mechanisms. They go on distorting our planning perspectives over and over again and we are happy to let them do so!

For all this, the book makes for educative reading One is also grateful for the data in an area which, although only one part of the much larger scenario of women's health problems, needed to be brought to the notice of health care planners and deliverers. One only wishes that it were truly set in the women's perspective.

With a beautiful jacket cover and attractive print, the book asks to be read. Unfortunately it abounds in typographical errors. Such slip-shod production is least expected in high-cost publications like this one

Ritu Priya

LEARNING ABOUT SEXUALITY: A Practical Beginning edited by Sondra Zeidestein and Kirsten Moore. Population Council and the International Women's Health Coalition, New York, 1996.

FOR many scholars any attempt to conduct research on the sensitive and complex topic of sexual behaviour and its meaning presents problems, including how to maintain confidentiality, elicit a meaningful response, and how to establish truth. These difficulties are compounded by the researcher's own biases about sexual values and presumptions about society's dominant sexual and cultural norms

Probably the thorniest issue raised by a celebration of subjectivity is whether the researcher is able to separate her own interpretation from those she encounters in the field. Therefore, researchers need to be familiar with their own biases and judgments about sexuality and make their own agendas regarding the questions they ask and how they listen and respond. What appears a collaborative practice is in fact a contested arena of authenticity and control. Who speaks in the text – the subject who narrates or the subject who collects and edits her story?

This edited collection of essays by Sondra Zeidestein and Kirsten Moore circulates interestingly around these knotty problems. In 24 carefully crafted essays, originally presented as papers at the annual meeting of the National Council of International Health in 1992, they explore the construction of sexuality. In the process, they reveal how this differs for both men and women and how, along with gender roles and power relations, it shapes the designing and providing of reproductive health services. At some length, and with some avoidable repetition, this book demonstrates that women – and some men – are not in a position to make autonomous decisions about their sexual behaviour due to a lack of knowledge about their bodies and different contraceptive methods which can effect their sexual relationships.

The three essays in Part 1, which along with the essay by Erickson and Steffen, will probably be the most interesting to readers, consider the methodological issues involved in sexual behaviour surveys. They examine the implications of accepting dominant constructions of sexuality in contemporary research: women rarely negotiate with their partners the nature of sexual activity, men are more easily aroused than women, masculinity is constructed on sexual performance, and so on. The second part explores the explicit and implicit links among reproductive health and sexuality. By contrast, the chapters in the final section provide inspiring examples of grassroots struggle by NGOs against entrenched attitudes about sexuality that impinge on reproductive health in countries like Tanzania, Brazil, Thailand and Zimbabwe.

Despite a variety of locations, approaches and foci, several common themes emerge. Most papers argue that sexuality is the social construction of a biological drive; it is multi-dimensional and dynamic. Women's role in sexual relations is perceived as passive This has severe consequences for reproductive health: unwanted pregnancies and abortions as well as gender-based abuse and violence. Significantly, some essays argue that as a social construct, sexuality can be influenced and changed. Too often, men and women act compulsively as if driven by their socially prescribed roles.

Another view stressed is the researcher's bias and links with power and truth. The book invokes 'experience' as the privileged element defining women, and the multivocality of these voices as they construct dialogic spaces with diverse subjects. Personal narratives are at the heart of the essays in this volume. Women's narratives about birth control, clandestine abortions – often told in a context of trauma and tragedy – create an emotionally charged atmosphere Women, these accounts show, do not have the slightest notion of their right to make decisions about sexuality and procreation. At the same time, these narratives focus the attention of a wide range of political and social groups on female sexuality.

Significantly, this saturation of the social field creates a discursive space in which women are encouraged to conceptualize their own sexuality. In the cases mentioned

here, women's embodied experiences proved to be the most compelling means of contesting dominant discourses, and of altering discourses that sought to define them.

Taken as a whole, the book raises questions about what is involved in writing about sexuality; what is the object of knowledge? What is the actual relationship between social theory and public policy? Is there a feminist method of constructing this relationship? One disappointment, however, is that although the authors claim to place an emphasis on sexuality, they allude to it only from time to time in relation to other health issues like AIDS, family planning, gynaecological disease and so on. The essays are written by different people, (social and biomedical scientists, health activists, sociologists, psychologists) with overlapping but unregimented interests. Thus certain topics are discussed repeatedly without adding to clarity.

Thus it is not surprising that the book lacks an analytical overview which, by addressing contemporary debates on the body and sexuality, would first show how sexuality, gender and reproduction can be separated into distinct systems of power Also, abandoning the essentialist perspective on human identity, which locates the body as existing prior to social structures, should not push us to the idea of the body as governed only by its context. However, in arguing this my aim is not to forget the political importance of attending to the historical context and representational field of feminist sexuality.

Most essays draw on the voices of women, some of which challenge popular assumptions about sexuality, reproduction and family. We need more such narratives and critical discussion of our theoretical and methodological assumptions, particularly in the light of the challenge posed by post-stucturalism. We need to view with suspicion the standard sociological categories such as 'individual', 'public', 'private', or 'fertility' employed in most of these essays as they are deeply gendered products of 19th century scholarship It is not enough to argue that gender and sexuality is central to the study of population, economic development and the formulation of health policies. The question is: how we can move from politically acceptable rhetoric about gender empowerment and reproductive rights for women to their incorporation into public policy.

Vidhu Verma

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND WRONGS: The Global Politics of Population Control by Betsy Hartmann. South End Press, Boston, 1995.

THIS second, revised edition examines population policies, their impact on women's health and reproductive rights and cautions against the neglect of social equity and development while discussing reproductive rights. It also critically examines the implications of post cold war developments on population issues.

Hartmann argues that the visions and goals of the population establishment are based on the view that rapid population growth is a major cause of underdevelopment in developing nations. Hence efforts to reduce this growth through intervention in women's fertility are needed. She questions such Malthusian ideas and the neo-Malthusian perspective on the nexus between population and environment. According to her, population control rests on false assumptions which justify and result in a top-down approach to family planning where prevention of pregnancy is given the highest priority.

Part I critically examines the widely held views on population issues. Orthodox Malthusian views consider the problem merely in terms of numbers and raise false alarms and wrong diagnoses, prescribing cures with little respect for human or women's rights. They project the growing population in developing nations as a major threat to environment and ignore factors like consumption in developed nations, policies that impoverish both the people and environment She cites the example of Indonesia, termed as a success story in popuation control, to show how coercive population control programmes can be. Hartmann probes the assumptions and claims of the population establishment in promoting family planning and concludes that forcing people to have fewer children by subtle and not so subtle methods of coercion, incentives and so on, will hurt women and not result in genuine development.

In part II, the history of the population control movement is discussed and changes over the times are pointed out. She argues that the new approach which appropriates the language of women's rights and expresses concern about the environment is meant more to support population control than anything else. A section of the environmental movement views population growth as a serious threat to environment and approves popualtion control. In building consensus and in manufacturing consent, private foundations, donors and NGO's often invoke the language of rights but accept the current population and development paradigm and talk of women's empowerment, more as a rhetoric than with commitment to real empowerment. According to Hartmann 'while feminists may find some space within the consensus for higher quality contraceptive, abortion and health services and increased access to economic and educational resources, the real political space will remain outside and in alliance with progressive development agencies, social justice environmentalists and anti-racism organisers In the New World Order not only are reproductive rights at stake, but basic economic survival and political freedoms.' This statement has proved to be relevant since targeting immigrants, beneficiaries of social security, has become a favourite political game in the USA and a section of the environmental movement has supported tough measures against immigrants.

In part III the author examines the development and application of contraceptive technologies and argues that

these technologies have often been thrust on women without taking into account their side effects and are delivered as magic bullets with no respect to women's health and well-being. While new technologies (for instance, vaccines for fertility control), which offer greater scope for abuse are promoted, barrier methods and male contraceptives were till recently neglected. Next, she argues that more equitable paths of social and economic development have proved to be more succesful than programmes focusing on family planning and population control. According to her, 'From a practical and ethical standpoint, the best population policy is to concentrate on improving human welfare in all its many facets.' She cautions the feminist movement about the establishment and warns that accepting a population framework could make it lose the critical edge and result in endorsing technocratic solutions to the population question. A broader politics of socio-economic transformation is desirable.

Hartmann's work brings out the importance of critical feminist analysis in examining population issues and shows that structures of domination and control are many and unless these structures are challenged there can be no real reproductive rights. In other words, it is essential to view reproductive rights not as an end but as a component of a broader agenda and struggle for women's social and economic empowerment. Such an agenda and struggle would reject the dominant paradigm of development. Her analysis shows that irrespective of the rhetoric, be it China or Indonesia, when states implement population control programmes as an end in themselves, women's interests and rights are sacrificed at the altar of population control.

This book provokes the reader to question the widely held views on population issues and provides an extraordinary critique of the population establishment. Though reproductive rights and empowerment have become fashionable buzzwords, this book will help us to probe the rhetoric and to understand the complexity of issues involved.

K. Ravi Srinivas

MANAGING QUALITY OF CARE IN POPULATION PROGRAMS edited by Anrudh Jain. Kumarian Press, Connecticut, 1992

THE concept of 'quality of care' was developed as part of a business strategy where products and services are geared toward the client In doing so, management is assured of the product's success in a competitive market. In 1990, Judith Bruce applied the concept of quality to the health sector specifically targeting population programmes, and developed a conceptual framework with six elements to help the manager ensure and monitor quality within an individual programme. However, there is little empirical evidence documenting the process of improving the quality of services and monitoring their impact, especially in resource poor settings.

In the past, the Indian government's health system was defined by its target-oriented family welfare approach. These targets and services were driven by the perceived needs of the top level with little input from the client or the provider. The abysmal failure of the system has been its inability to attract and sustain clients which have often resulted in documented cases of neglect and abuse. Quality of care, therefore, is an important concept that needs to be considered by policy-makers and managers if the services are to be a success. The government's recent shift to a target-free approach and the growing momentum in the field of reproductive health was undertaken in a climate where only one service exists: namely, family planning (that too limited to sterilization). There was virtually no alternate system of service delivery or evaluation. In this case, quality of care is essential as it advocates for a client-centred approach and in doing so, prescribes a measure of professionalism to revive the flailing health system

The volume under review is based on presentations and discussions at a conference held by the International Council on the Management of Population Programmes (ICOMP) in collaboration with the Population Council. The theme of the conference centred on strategies to improve the quality of services in population programmes. (Preface, p. xiii). To this end, this volume presents a concise picture of conceptual definitions and framework of quality of care, some broad examples from the field, and possible ways to monitor these programmes.

The papers are divided into two sections: the first presents the different aspects as they relate to the management and improvement of quality of care in family planning programmes; the second section provides various strategies for measuring and monitoring using case studies from Latin America, Kenya, and India. In the introductory section, Jain discusses the definitions and impact of quality of care in existing programmes and he concludes with basic recommendations for the future.

In keeping with the title of the book, the chapters focus on the supply side of the health service structure and management of quality of care in the services. Chapters highlight aspects such as top management commitment, provider motivation, and the measure and reward of quality. While it is essential to address different aspects of management, measuring, and monitoring quality of care in family planning programmes, in reading through the volume, one has a definite sense of the 'management angle' but much less of the client. In two chapters, the importance of women-centred family planning programmes is highlighted, especially in those countries where women are marginalized and their decision-making roles constrained. In Bruce's chapter, she suggests that family planning programmes need to go beyond incorporating gender perspectives to include women at the top levels of management,

and to 'harness' the hitherto unaddressed issue of women's collective and individual power (p. 36). Visaria and Visaria attempted to document the client's (most often the woman) experience and present information on the utilization and quality of family planning services as reported by the clients in Bharuch and Panchmahals districts of Gujarat.

This book provides a comprehensive perspective for understanding the quality of care. In addition, the authors draw amply from the field providing a realistic backdrop to which the reader can refer. However, some issues remain unresolved. Careful attention needs to be paid to bridge the gap between providers and clients, monitoring work at all levels of the programme chain, and the operationalization and sustainability of such programmes. At the broader level, the question of applying the concepts of quality of care to services that go beyond family planning and embrace a reproductive and sexual health approach needs to be explored given the current shift in strategy at the national and state levels.

Sagri Singh

THE STATE OF WORLD POPULATION 1996. United Nations Population Fund, 1996.

THIS report is a follow up of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) for implementing the reproductive health agenda. The 76 page document has 35 panels which provide both a vivid description and graphic account of the various issues raised. The tables at the end provide data on the status of individual countries of the world on selected indicators for the achievements of the goals of ICPD as well as on demographic, social and economic matters. The technical notes provide useful information on the definitions of these indicators.

What the report reveals is that within the next 10 years, more than half the people in the world (3.3 billion) will live in cities, almost all of them in what is today's developing world. However, it also frankly admits that widespread poverty casts a shadow over such an urban future. 'According to the national studies up to half the population of several cities in some of the world's poorest countries are living below official poverty lines'. This indicates the failure of policies pursued by governments in the last 20 years for reversing existing urbanization trends. It emphasizes that the main factor behind urban population growth in most regions and many countries is a *natural increase*, suggesting that reduction of this component will require substantial progress in social development. Central to this agenda is the empowerment of women and a guarantee of their human rights, including the right to reproductive and sexual health services.

Next, it concentrates on the relationship between urban and rural areas as the two cannot be addressed in isolation. 'Trade, migration and remittances, people and money are the most obvious signs of the relationships between urban and rural areas. It has also led to an increased urban demand for different foods and a wider range of consumer products. The urbanization of consumption patterns extends to health care, including reproductive health and family planning.'

There is an honest acknowledgment of structural adjustment programmes seriously affecting the quality of urban life. At least 600 million urban dwellers live in 'life and health threatening' circumstances. However, this is considered a natural response to global economic integration, reassuring readers on the concern of the international community to lighten the burden of structural adjustment programmes on the social sector and the need for including better safeguards for vulnerable sections of the population. By referring to the East Asian 'economic tigers', where rapid transformations have led to higher incomes and a mitigation of the negative impacts of structural adjustments, the report also attempts to provide hope for the poor in the rest of the world.

In order to implement the ICPD programme of action for universal access to high quality reproductive health services including family planning and sexual health for both men and women, it reiterates UNFPA's commitment to provide support for advocacy, policy formulation and technical capacity building to governments, NGOs, community organizations and the private sector.

This, in brief, is what the report intends to offer. But it is necessary to remember that we live in an era of 'globalization' and 'integrated world economy' and that the structural adjustment programmes promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the national economies of the third world, East Europe and the former Soviet republics are the most important agenda today. Urban growth, squalor and environmental degradation have unleashed a level of human misery which cannot be wished away, even by the most ardent defenders of globalization. In fact, urban environmental disaster is the Achilles heel even in the case of the East Asian countries, lauded as the creators of an economic miracle.

The rapid urban growth in Europe during the 19th century was mainly fuelled by a growing urban manufacturing sector. Contrary to this, the causes for urban concentration in the suddenly burgeoning megacities of the third world follow a different trajectory. International donor agencies, famous for their obsession with population control in the third world, are shifting their focus from rural areas to the cities. The International Conference on Population and Development held at Cairo in 1994, coined a new category 'Reproductive Health' to replace the earlier 'MCH and Family Planning', with the minor addition of a sexual health package.

This provides an effective strategy for articulating a discourse on a variety of third world problems. It also offers a simple panacea for the twin problems of urban squalor

and population explosion. The strategy advises us to focus efforts on the control of the 'natural growth' component of the population explosion in cities by an enhanced investment in social development, empowerment of women through education and health, including reproductive health and family planning. Thus the report appears as yet another attempt to impose a discourse and its solutions on the reader.

The report is a useful document, providing current data and information on issues of urbanization, poverty and reproductive health. But for those familiar with the emerging and growing international developmental discourse on these issues, it has nothing new to offer. In fact, it is a bitter reminder that international donor agencies have no solution to offer for the miseries of urban poverty and squalor in the third world except advising the poor to exercise their fundamental human right of access to the means of curbing population. The means to achieve this are offered gratis by the donor community in the form of a variety of contraceptives through government channels in exchange for a commitment on structural adjustment of their national economies. Those who are not convinced of the rationale of this package will have to look for their answers elsewhere

Onkar Mittal

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 1996. United Nations Development Programme, New York, 1996.

EVERY now and then, amidst the clamour of market-oriented reports and studies originating out of Washington and Geneva (home to the World Bank/International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation respectively) comes a partial voice of sanity. The publications of the United Nations have tended to provide a welcome corrective to the hortatory assertions of the Fund-Bank-WTO triad and the UNDP's *Human Development Report* (*HDR*) for 1996 is no exception. Unlike the World Bank's *World Development Report*, UNCTAD's *World Investment Report*, the WTO's *World Trade Report* and the IMF's *Global Economic Outlook*, the *HDR* tells it like it really is.

Through a mass of statistics, the *HDR* confirms what many of us have suspected for long: that the liberalised, market-driven policies governments around the world are pursuing have failed to deliver the fruits of development to the majority of their citizens. According to the economic orthodoxy of Bretton Woods, growth – abstract and disembodied – is a panacea for poverty. Under the guidance of Fund-Bank recommended 'structural adjustment' policies, the state is removing itself from the economic and social arena so that private enterprise can get on with the job of growth (read profits) unencumbered by regulations, taxes and tariffs.

In contrast, what the *HDR* shows is that not only do the benefits of growth fail to trickle-down but that the lack of human development eventually becomes a constraining factor for growth itself. More strikingly, the *HDR* concludes – from a study of the relationship between income growth and human development from 1960 to 1992 – that no country with fast income growth and slow human development improvement was able to make the transition to fast human development improvement. Instead, in the absence of progress on the human development front, fast income growers like Brazil, Egypt and Cameroon all ended the period with substantially slower growth.

According to the *HDR*, no less than 89 countries are worse off economically than they were a decade or more ago. In particular, 70 developing countries – mostly in Africa, Latin America and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) – have returned to levels of per capita income that they first reached in the 1960s and 1970s. Contrary to popular perception, not all of these countries are 'basket cases', torn apart by civil war, like Rwanda, Liberia, Sudan or Nicaragua. Even resource-rich countries like Venezuela or the IMF's one-time model reformer, Ghana, have experienced negative growth as far as per capita income is concerned. In the last two countries, per capita income today is actually less than the 1960 level.

Apart from chronicling the sad story of these 'lost decades', the *HDR* comes up with some other striking facts about the global economy. We learn that the world has 358 billionaires and that their combined assets exceed the total annual income of the world's 2.3 billion poorest people – that is, 45 per cent of the global population. If the process generating such inequalities is not held in check, the *HDR* warns that it will generate a world 'gargantuan in its excesses and grotesque in its human and economic inequalities'. Readers can only wonder what could be more grotesque than what the *HDR* has documented as the existing reality.

As for those countries which have experienced positive economic growth, the *HDR* points out that job generation has tended to lag behind. A survey of 69 countries over the past decade shows that of the 46 countries which recorded economic growth, only 27 saw employment increase while 19 experienced 'jobless growth'. The latter group includes both India and Pakistan

One of the innovations the *HDR* has made this year is to devise a new index aimed at capturing elements of poverty other than low income. Focusing on what it calls the 'poverty of human capabilities', the UNDP's Capability Poverty Measure (CPM) reflects the percentage of people who lack basic, or minimally essential human capabilities. These capabilities are viewed both as ends in themselves as well as essential for moving out of income poverty The CPM is based on the proportion of children under five years who are underweight (considered one of the best proxies for the state of public health), the proportion of births unattended by trained health personnel (measuring healthy reproduction) and the rate of female illiteracy. Following the theoretical work of Amartya Sen, the new index stresses

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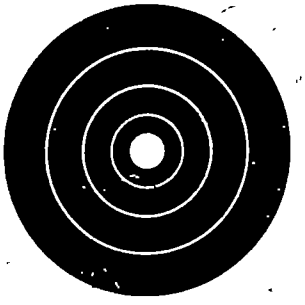

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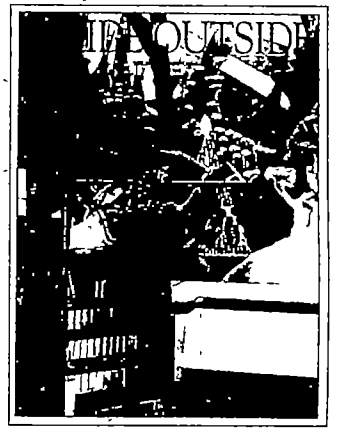

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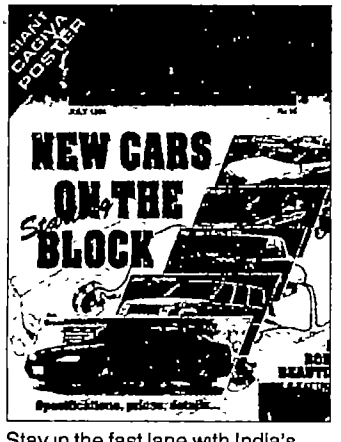

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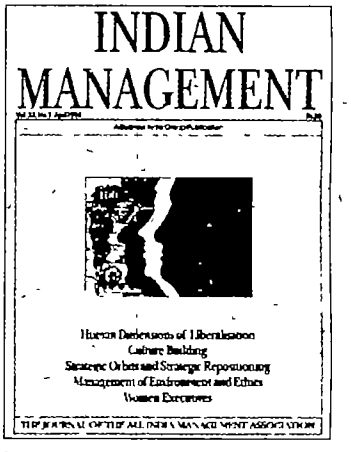

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the deprivation of women because of their central role in families and society. Since the measure is wider than previous measures, the *HDR* found 37 per cent of people in developing countries suffering from capability poverty as compared to 21 per cent considered below the income poverty line.

India's pathetic showing on the capabilities index amply reflects the contempt our political and economic elites have for the basic well-being of the people. It may come as a shock to many that Myanmar, a country as poor as India, ranks much higher on the CPM measure. The *HDR* also questions the relevance of a growth model driven by the consumption needs of the affluent – which India has been following since independence and particularly since liberalisation – and posits instead the need for employment-driven growth The report stresses the importance of sustained investment in health and education, providing equal access to social services, equitable access to productive assets especially land; and, above all, to the need for a clear political commitment to full employment. But looking at the direction being taken by the Deve Gowda government, all this advice appears to have fallen on deaf ears.

One of the problems with the *HDR* is its failure to link the growing global reality of poverty and inequality to the very process of globalisation. Although it does not explicitly do so, the report actually comes dangerously close to suggesting that poor countries hasten their integration with the global economy in order to reverse the process of their immiseration. But the link between poverty and globalisation is well-founded. To take just one small example – the 358 billionaires singled out by the *HDR*. These billionaires and their colossal wealth did not spring from the sky. Rather, it is the internationalisation of capital, as evinced by the record volume of trans-border capital flows, which is leading to monopolisation on an ever-increasing scale and generating massive imbalances in income and wealth holdings throughout the world. The policies advocated by the World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organisation have simultaneously facilitated the ingress of this capital, pared the state to minimalist functions and marginalised millions on a global scale. It is futile to call for emphasis to be placed on human development while ignoring this basic reality.

Nevertheless, the *HDR* is a useful document because it provides plenty of evidence that the direction of the world economy is totally wrong. While it is unfair to expect the UNDP to go into all of the issues and linkages involved, interested economists should mine the data it has collected in order to strengthen the argument against the orthodoxy of free markets.

Siddharth Varadarajan

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Comment:

Clichés in communication for health care

THIS is the story of communication in health care as never told before.

Let us start with the early history of health care. The Bhore Committee report which laid the foundations for development of the present health care system in India, had strongly recommended the need for people to know about their health problems and the measures they can take to protect themselves or prevent the spread of disease. Activities related to the educational aspect of health care were identified as health education. It was only after Independence that the recommendations of the committee were implemented and health education considered an important aspect of health services. The encouragement and support for starting health education programmes came from the World Health Organization, established in 1948.

Ironically, few were aware of what was meant by health education. The elders in the profession related it to magic lantern shows organized by the local medical officer, who was considered incapable of handling more important health care programmes (whatever they may be).

In 1952, when I was working as a district medical and health officer at Jullundhar, I received a telegram from a Col. Dutta to ask whether I would like to join a postgraduate course in health education at Berkeley, California. I had no clear idea about health education at this stage. Was it something to do with publicity? Even my colleagues or seniors could not explain the professional relevance of this subject to me. 'Why do you want to forget your professional competence by joining such a course?' they asked. But then for someone seeking adventure, this seemed too good an opportunity to miss and I decided to take the plunge.

When they learnt of my choice my colleagues and seniors were more excited about my proposed trip to California than the fact that I was to pursue my studies in a hitherto unknown subject in India – 'health education'. The long and short of the conversation was that the training would make me a propaganda or publicity man. Far from revealing envy, my colleagues conveyed a sense of hidden sympathy for someone who was going to give up his profession for the sake of a visit to the USA.

Meeting Dr. Dorothy Nyswander and Dr. Williams Griffiths from the Department of Health Education, School of Public Health at Berkeley, California, was memorable. Three factors are important to recall about that experience in today's world of institutional training. One, their warmth as opposed to the cold aloofness observed by some academicians when interacting with their students. To my mind, education without a human touch is like a postman delivering mail at your door. Secondly, this was the first time the School of Public Health at Berkeley had admitted foreign students. Since many of us found it difficult to follow examples and situations taken from the USA alone, we suggested a change in the curriculum. The Dean of the Faculty of Public Health working with the Chancellor of the University introduced changes within a week of our request. This was an example of 'Education at work' by precept and practice. But most important of all was the fact that the term health education ceased to be mysterious. It soon became evident that 'health education' was communicating with the community with compassion, warmth, patience, problems that relate to their health and well-being. In other words, communication was not separate from, but an integral part of, the process of interaction between the health worker and the clientele he/she serves.

Post 1952, when community development was actively promoted by the government, health education suddenly gained legitimacy. A new zest was observed in the villages with experiments at Nilokheri and the setting up of the community development programmes There is a wealth of material available from that period to indicate that communication for action brings about a change in the lifestyles of a people. These lessons were quickly studied by experts in agriculture, behavioural sciences and health.

During this period, pioneering work was undertaken by a number of regional, multi-disciplinary action oriented research projects, which were started with bilateral assistance. Some of these were Research cum Action Projects

at Najafgarh (Delhi), Singur (W. Bengal), Poonamali (Tamil Nadu), Lucknow (U.P.) and Gandhigram (Tamil Nadu). An important feature of these projects was a multi-disciplinary staff, which took a holistic view of the problem to be remedied with local help. The projects also benefited from the contribution of eminent behavioural scientists from India and abroad: M.N. Srinivas, M.S. Gore, Biswas (from Delhi University); C. Chandrashekar from the Demograph Research Centre, Bombay, H.S Dhillon from PRAI, Lucknow and Hugh Leavell and Moye Frymen from USA

These projects and others like them, gained field experience about health education at the grassroots. Yet some of them, although academically sound, failed as people cannot be treated like guinea pigs. In the Najafgarh Project, for instance, some villages were identified as 'villages for action through group work', while some others were to be exposed only to media (as means of communication). Theoretically this may sound right but the unpredictable element were the villagers. What could one do when halfway through the project, the women of a certain village decide to play an active role in the project activity and demanded a toilet in their home? It would have been foolish to refuse their request. On the other hand, when one of the villages ready for community action failed to get an adequate supply of pans and traps (an unforgivable lapse), they decided to withdraw from the project. Yet what these projects did was to help health administrators, politicians and even technocrats (medical personnel) understand the problems of health education at work.

Concurrent with the work in the field, the central and state governments were implementing the recommendation of the Bhore Committee. The first institution to come up was the Central Health Education Bureau (CHEB). Under the able guidance of its first director Dr. V. Rama Krishna, it was able to institutionalize health education as a part of the government's health services. Thus a network of trained professionals and health administrators was established to plan and operate health education services at all levels.

By 1960, health education acquired a form and shape, although medical specialists still snubbed the entire effort as 'propaganda' and discouraged the development of health education as a discipline. On the other hand, administrators gradually became aware of the international concern about the subject and started to show their own interest in health education activities or forums where health education was the primary subject for discussion.

Health education established itself as a postgraduate course in Delhi University after struggling against several prejudices. At first, certain academics considered it a waste of time to discuss the subject. They felt the educational aspect of the subject must go to the department of education sciences! But exposure to world opinion and the presence of foreign experts helped in setting up the diploma course in health education at Delhi University.

All this earned a small niche for the newly recognized discipline, but as soon as professionals picked up the vocabulary and were unable to translate it into action, they resorted to cynical dismissals. An internationally renowned orthopaedic surgeon when occupying the highest chair in the Ministry of Health said, 'We impart health education when we instruct participants about their operation.' This was considered important enough for him to be the spokesman for health education activities in India. Gradually health education lost its shine and in the world of 'pick your prescription and move', health education was soon a forgotten entity.

The golden period of health education in India lasted about one decade. Its aura attracted a wide range of people from various professions. Health education tools and techniques which gave an edge to field-oriented health care programmes, soon became a means of exporting health education consultants when they should have been serving their country. Messengers from the field of health education from India travelled far and wide, like Buddhist monks of yore, carrying with them the lustre, art and skill of health education but, like the ancient Buddhist missionaries, lost their hold on the land of their birth.

With the demise of health education was born 'communication'. The exact date of the transmigration of the soul from health education to communication is uncertain: perhaps it occurred at the time of the family planning drive. Health education was considered too slow and archaic. In this sense, communication had an edge over health education for it immediately conveyed a picture to the mind – of red triangles, folk songs, dramas, films, TV serials. Unfortunately, this meant that the bureaucrat became an expert almost overnight and the buck was passed to extension education and health functionaries. Health professionals found it convenient to say, 'Oh yes, we have planned communication strategies at the grassroots level through our extension workers.' But what did this mean? Who was communicating with whom and how? Don't worry about details, we were assured, these can be worked out at the micro level. We should concentrate on country-wide planning of methods, materials and manpower requirements.

The use of the word communication inflated both the size and dimension of the bandwagon. Advertising agencies that had little interest in the educational aspect of the family planning programme vied with each other to mount a country-wide programme. Communication, like an avalanche, virtually destroyed the institutional structure of health education. Today, the million dollar question (with literally millions of dollars hanging on it) still remains: 'What is communication?'

The empty offices and dead silence of the health education banner tells its own tale Health education is dead long live communication!

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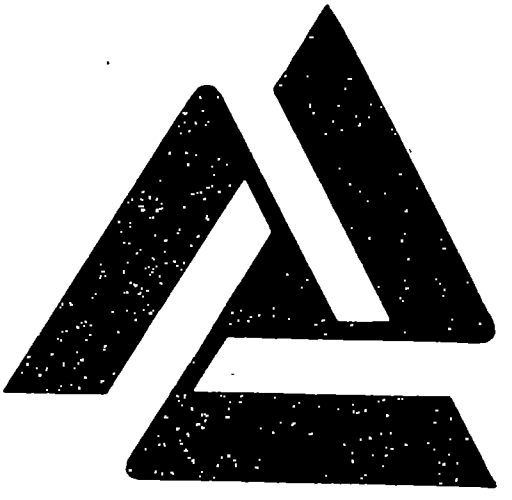

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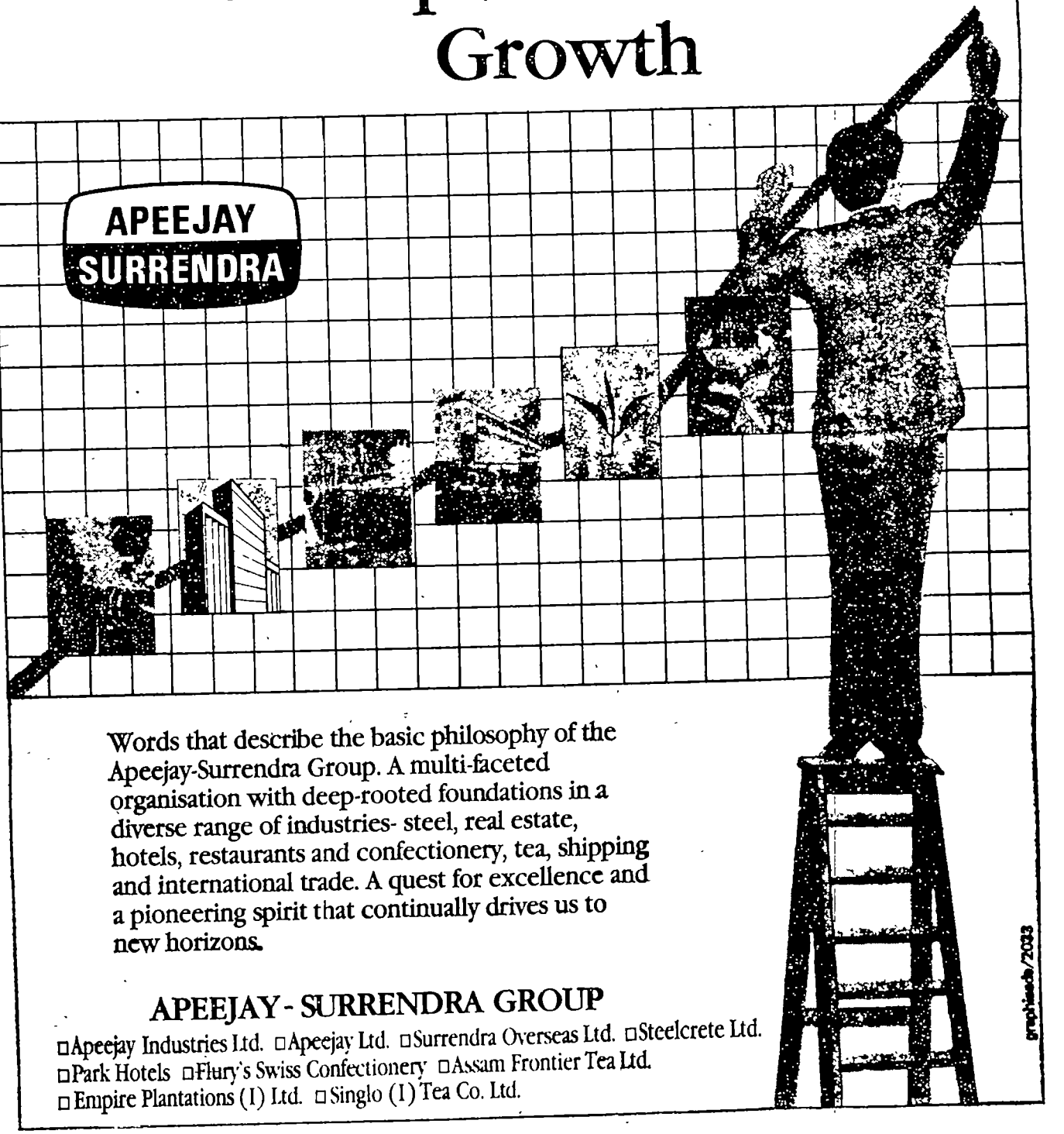

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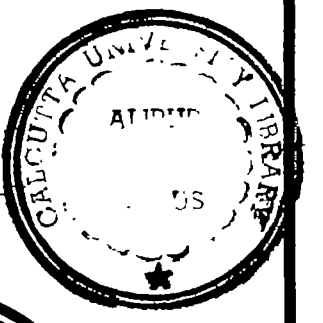

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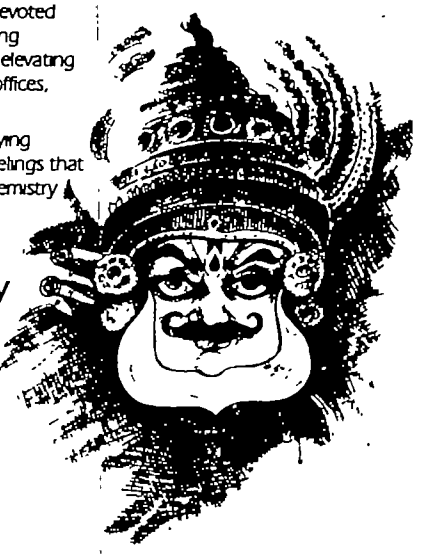

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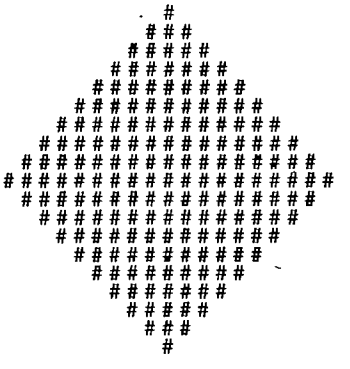

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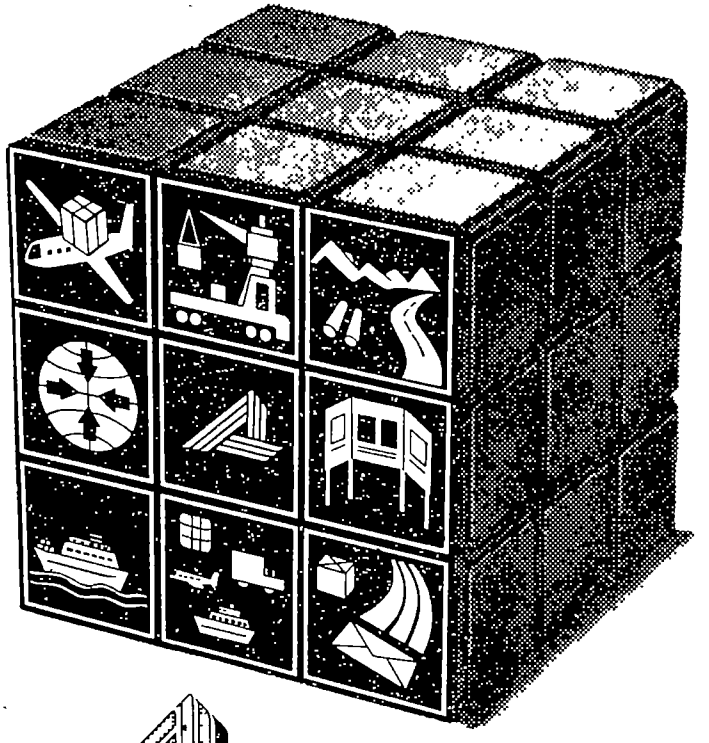

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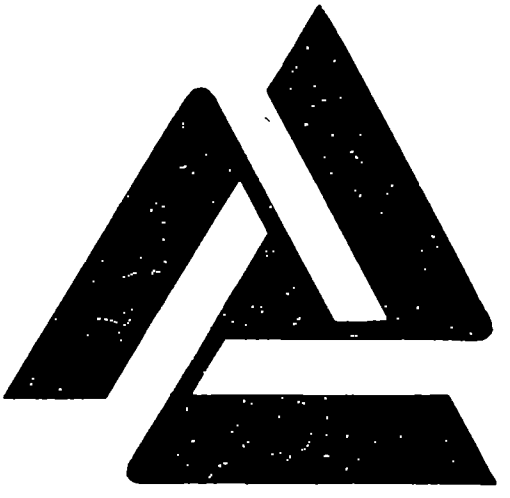

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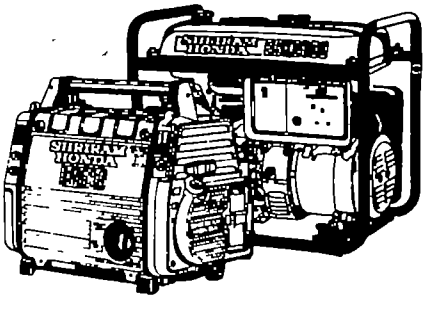

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a symposium on

the growing importance

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symposium participants

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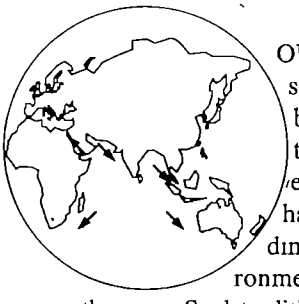
The problem



OUR dominant perceptions of security continue to be governed by developments on land, while the sea is perceived as a mere extension of these activities. This has led to a neglect of the maritime dimensions of India's security environment by successive governments over the years Such traditional concepts have recently been challenged by the country's growing dependence on the sea, and the impact of this relationship on economic and military security. These factors are expected to become more complex and important as we move into the 21st century. It is time we began to seriously examine some of these issues, and think through their implications for the country's maritime security

The major physical features of India and her geographical position in the Indian Ocean indicate a centuries-old relationship with the sea. In view of the location and height of the Himalayas, the country's major transit and trade routes are situated on the coast. The coastline of over 6,000 km extending deep into the Indian Ocean, with vast expanses of sea on three sides, also suggests the intensity of the relationship between the country and the sea.

In addition, the Indian coastline is augmented by about 1,400 km of island and rock territories on either side. These comprise the 474 islands and rocks of the Lakshadweep group in the Arabian Sea, and the 723 islands and rocks of the Andaman and Nicobar group in the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, the Indian Ocean is unique among the four major oceans of the world as it is the only one named after a specific country.

Notwithstanding these geographical and trade factors, there is a poor understanding of the importance of the sea to the country's security. This is due primarily to a continuation of the 'landward' mindset of our Mughal rulers, as well as the legacy of Britain's colonial security doctrine in the Indian Ocean, which minimised the role of a naval force for India. The multi-faceted and multi-dimensional aspects of the country's relationship with the sea, and the non-exclusive nature of some of the issues at hand, further exacerbated the neglect of the sea. In this context it is important to remember that western domination of India was due in no small measure to a lack of appreciation of the maritime dimensions of security.

In order to portray a balanced view of India's security environment, therefore, we urgently need to begin thinking in a maritime perspective and act accordingly. A start can be made by examining India's dependence on the sea in economic, political and military terms. India's dependence on the sea for its economic growth and development can be gauged from the nature and extent of its foreign trade, shipping, energy requirements (crude oil and natural gas) and the exploitation of minerals and other resources

Although economic growth places considerable emphasis on external trade, both imports and exports, it is seldom realised that nearly all of it takes place on the sea. Seaborne trade accounts for a staggering 97% of the country's total external trade, a fact that has often led people to draw comparisons with India in terms of an island state.

The total value of seaborne trade in 1994-95 was estimated at Rs. 1670 billion (about 20% of GNP). This is expected to grow substantially by the turn of the century However, little thought has been given to the expansion of the infrastructure required to handle this increasing volume of trade, a fact reflected in the poor condition of our major ports. Whereas it takes six days to turn around a ship in Mumbai, in Singapore this is handled in just half a day. Such factors will clearly impose limitations and penalties on the volume of goods handled in the future

Although India's merchant fleet consists of nearly 500 ships, they are able to carry just over a third of total seaborne trade. Serious consideration needs to be given to increasing the extent of trade carried aboard Indian bottoms, as well as to the possibility of foreign-flagged merchant ships refusing to enter Indian ports in times of tension or conflict.

India is a net importer of energy resources, especially of crude oil from the Persian Gulf. Its inability to meet domestic demand or cope with the possible disruption of energy supplies can severely destabilise the economy and may lead to social unrest and instability within the country. In 1994, the parliamentary standing committee on energy began its third report by stating starkly that 'energy is security', and went on to note that 'deficiencies in this critical strategic sector compromise national security'.

As India's energy demands grow with higher rates of economic growth, its dependence on the import of crude oil is bound to increase Imports could well exceed domestic production during the next decade. These are expected to continue to be sourced primarily from the Persian Gulf (by sea), and at a later stage from Central Asia via Iran (again by sea) or by land through Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a means of ensuring energy security this necessitates a closer and harder look at India's foreign policy in the area.

The impact of India's dependence on the import of energy can also be seen in financial terms. As a result of the Gulf conflict in 1990-91, the net value of the import of oil during the year rose by 50%, and that of petroleum, oil and other lubricants (POL) by as much as 72%. The latter increase accounted for as much as a third of total export earnings for the year. In the current year, POL imports are expected to increase to Rs. 320 billion

Seaborne trade involved the import of 27.3 million tons of crude oil in 1995-96. This met about 44% of the country's total demand. In this context it is important to note that the major sea lines of communication for the transportation of crude oil lie off the coast of Pakistan.

Crude oil extracted from offshore areas in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal (22.7 million tons in 1995-96), met 36% of total demand in the country, and constituted 64% of total domestic production. In effect, therefore, as much as 80% of India's demand for crude oil is met from the sea.

Offshore supplies of natural gas presently constitute 74% of total domestic production. The proposed construction of submarine pipelines in the Arabian Sea will facilitate the transportation of much-needed natural gas from the Persian Gulf, primarily Iran. The security implications – as well as the routes – of these submarine and onshore pipelines need careful consideration as well.

The changes in the international Law of the Sea, formalised in November 1994, supported India's claim to an extended maritime zone The territorial sea along its extensive coastline was legitimised to a distance of 12 nm, with a contiguous zone of an additional 24 nm. More important, India was provided a 200 nm Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for its mainland and island territories, and a legal continental shelf of 200-350 nm. The EEZ could extend even further to 300 nm by the year 2004, if preliminary exploration of the extended zone is completed by then. In 1987, India also became the first developing state to be accorded the status of a 'pioneer investor', which provided it an area of 150,000 sq km in the central Indian Ocean for deep seabed mining.

The dramatic increase in India's sea area to some 2.8 million sq km, over two-thirds of the total area of land, provides it with considerable potential. This primarily involves the exploitation of Polymetallic Nodules (PMN) in the short term. In addition to manganese, these PMNs contain nickel, cobalt, and copper – all presently imported by India. Moreover, the depletion of resources on land, and

the increasing sophistication of modern technology for deep seabed mining, will almost surely increase the economic importance of the sea in the future. This could encourage the possibility of sharing technology, bringing about joint ventures and cooperation in the area.

A perspective on maritime security, by necessity, needs to be seen in an international and ocean-wide context. This is due to the unique nature of the ocean, which provides links with a number of countries in the area. However, there is considerable confusion over the extent of the 'rim', the 'region', and the 'community' of the Indian Ocean. Whereas the number of rim states varies from 28 to 31 (all islands; most littorals), the number of states in the Indian Ocean region ranges from 35 to 47 (including land-locked countries dependent on the Indian Ocean), and those of the Indian Ocean community could be as many as 60 (including states not dependent on the Indian Ocean).

The demise of the cold war and the end of superpower rivalry not only made redundant the concept of a Zone of Peace (ZOP) in the Indian Ocean, but also broke the ideological barrier to the establishment of an ocean-wide forum for the discussion of regional issues. Moreover, the worldwide focus on regional economic blocs, the liberalization and globalization of the Indian economy and the emergence of a democratic South Africa as a powerful player in the region, hastened the formation of such an organisation Thus, an association of rim states of the Indian Ocean, the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative (IORI), was formed at Mauritius in March 1995; this will be renamed the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) from March 1997.

At present, the IORI consists of 14 member states, including the most important players in the region: India, Australia and South Africa. It is aimed exclusively at bolstering economic cooperation among countries in an area where intra-regional trade accounts for just 20% of total volume This is a 'first track' inter-governmental approach to Indian Ocean cooperation, whereby governmental delegations include officials, business persons as well as academics In order to concentrate on economic cooperation, no bilateral or security-related issues are to be raised during its deliberations

In June 1995, within three months after the formation of the IORI, Australia hosted the first meeting of the International Forum on the Indian Ocean Region (IFIOR) at Perth. In contrast to the Mauritius initiative this was a 'second track' event, attended by officials in their personal capacities, business persons and academics, representing 23 countries of the Indian Ocean region. The forum discussed economic cooperation as well as other issues, including maritime cooperation and military security in the region. Not to be left out, New Delhi in November 1995 also hosted a major international conference on the making of an Indian Ocean community This was followed by another international conference at Tehran in November 1996 on the Indian Ocean community. This was understandable as Tehran was upset at being excluded from the 'first track' process

Maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean in non-sensitive areas is expected to increase. This would not only benefit the states of the rim/region but also enhance mutual confidence and trust. An important start has been made for the mitigation of maritime natural hazards such as storm surges, floods, tsunamis and tropical cyclones. To carry this out, it is planned to devise ways of enhancing the capacity of states to manage natural hazards and their capability to prevent and mitigate the effects. Increased coordination on search and rescue (SAR) operations could also take place. At a later stage, joint surveillance operations and joint maritime contingency planning may be undertaken as well.

Meanwhile, various areas of naval cooperation for the Asia-Pacific region (including the eastern part of the Indian Ocean) have been identified. Although at present this is premature for the entire Indian Ocean region, it is important to mention them in view of their possible future importance. These include greater transparency in procurement plans, multilateral agreement on the prevention of incidents at sea, shared or joint training opportunities, naval hydrographic training and operation, and warship maintenance and construction.

India's location and geophysical characteristics make both its territory and economic growth vulnerable to the threat or use of force from the sea. This ensures its dependence on a medium-sized balanced naval force for maritime security. Although the navy took an active part in only one of the four wars against Pakistan and China, it played an important role in the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka (1987-1990) and the Maldives (1988). At present, it faces an unprecedented decline in its force levels, which could have serious repercussions for maritime security. In the next three years, the number of principal combatants will decrease from 40 to 28, a reduction of nearly a third. This will include the decommissioning of seven submarines. Moreover, within the next six or seven years, the navy will not have a single aircraft carrier. Even if a carrier is constructed indigenously, it is unlikely to be commissioned before both the Vikrant and the Viraat are phased out.

These events are taking place at a time when the conduct of several hostile activities would critically test Indian political and economic endurance. These include disruption of the sea lines of communication; prevention of a secure supply of energy resources from the Persian Gulf; blockade of Indian ports; sabotage of oil platforms or submarine pipelines; dispute over Indian territory, especially its islands; and finally, an attack on naval and coast guard ships or civil and military aircraft flying over the sea.

Moreover, a number of additional non-military and military-related factors could threaten India's economic and political stability. These include the spread of small arms

and light weapons, along with their linkage to drug trafficking, illegal transnational migration and the insecurity of small states, especially islands of the Indian Ocean.

Traditionally, the Pakistan Navy has constituted the major military threat to Indian maritime security. Although it could never match the Indian Navy in quantitative terms, the Pakistan Navy has progressively tried to surpass it in qualitative terms. This resulted in the procurement of an armed submarine four years before similar acquisitions by India; the deployment of submarine-launched anti-ship missiles; and the operation of long-range maritime strike aircraft. It will not be surprising, therefore, if this 'sea denial' aspect of Pakistan's naval policy continues to be stressed into the next decade. Meanwhile, in the past few years, the Pakistan Navy has ordered three advanced technology submarines from France, modernised six Type-21 frigates acquired from Britain, and received the first of three P-3C Orion maritime strike aircraft from the United States.

In addition, China continues to display increased interest in the seas around India, which could lead to sustained Chinese naval activity in the area in the near future Since mid-1992, intelligence reports have persistently indicated Chinese assistance in the construction of electronic and naval facilities to Myanmar. Of special concern is the installation of a Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) facility on Coco island, just 30 nm from the Indian Andaman chain of islands. In 1993-94, new radar equipment was installed, enabling the monitoring of Indian naval communications in the area, and possibly even India's ballistic missile tests off its eastern coast. The modernization of Hianggyi naval base could similarly be aimed at supporting future Chinese submarine operations in the area.

Last year, for the first time, the United States deployed an independent fleet for operations in the western Indian Ocean on a permanent basis. The new U.S. Fifth Fleet, based off Bahrain, indicates a significant increase in the American political and military commitment to the region. It also represents a crucial aspect of American military power in relation to both Iran and Iraq. Moreover, France continues to maintain a standing naval force in the south-western part of the Indian Ocean.

The most worrying aspect of India's maritime security is the government's piecemeal and ad hoc approach when dealing with these issues. Along with a lack of focus on maritime affairs, such an attitude displays a singular ignorance of the security implications resulting from the country's growing dependence on the sea. Therefore, several questions dealing with the economic, political, and military aspects of this relationship need to be raised

An important economic aspect of maritime security clearly concerns our growing dependence on future energy imports. This relates primarily to the vulnerability of oil supplies from the Persian Gulf. After all, energy resources could easily become a major source of tension, as China's assertive policy in the South China Sea demonstrates. Should we not re-examine our policy towards the Persian Gulf in an attempt to further diversify our energy supplies? To what extent do we improve our relations with Iran, do we add a defence component to it? Would this affect our levels of contact with the United States? In the event of a crisis in the Persian Gulf, to what extent would the presence of the American Fifth Fleet keep open our own lines of communication to the area? What would be the case in the event of an Indo-Pak conflict? How do we deal with the supply of natural gas from the region in the future: via Iran or Pakistan, or both?

Again, we continue to lag far behind other countries in terms of political initiatives. In November 1993, when a selective economic grouping of the Indian Ocean rim was first proposed by R.F. Botha, former Foreign Minister of South Africa, we were caught by surprise. It is high time we evolved a concrete policy towards cooperation in the Indian Ocean. How do we deal with the clamour for membership of the IORI? Should we not freeze membership for a fixed period of three years till the end of the decade to concentrate on trade and investment activities? Meanwhile, countries interested in membership could be given a sectoral-dialogue partner status till such a time when membership is opened. Should we not be prepared to examine non-military and military-related security issues in the first track process, as appears to be the trend of the future? Should we continue to let the second track process go far ahead of the first track on some core issues? In terms of maritime cooperation, to what extent should India be involved – or better still, lead the way – as befits a major player in the Indian Ocean region? One basic problem still persists: is it at all possible to talk of an Indian Ocean region, of 47 countries of differing size, population, political systems and with uneven rates of economic growth and development?

In terms of the military aspects it is important to continue monitoring Pakistani naval activity, simultaneously keeping a close look at Chinese military activity in Myanmar Should the latter be suppressed in terms of our foreign policy considerations vis-a-vis China? Moreover, in terms of our naval policy, should we not take increasing cognizance of military-related threats to security, such as energy dependence and, in the future, seabed mining?

The essence of the problem of maritime security is the total absence of a comprehensive perspective on this subject In view of its dynamics and interactions which become increasingly important and complex as we move into the 21st century, this is desperately needed A good beginning would be the formulation of a comprehensive and proactive maritime policy for the country This should go far beyond the limited scientific and technological brief of the government's 'Ocean Policy' of November 1982, and address the economic, political, as well as the military aspects of the maritime dimensions of Indian security.

RAHUL ROY-CHAUDHURY

The myth of collective security

C RAJA MOHAN

FOR more than three decades, ever since the British announced their military withdrawal from the 'East of Suez', the nations of the Indian Ocean littoral have dreamt of a framework for collective security in the region. Get rid of the great powers and their rivalries in the region, it was suggested, and the newly decolonized nations of the Indian Ocean littoral would create peace and harmony through cooperation. That was the essence of the demand of the non-aligned nations for a 'zone of peace' in the Indian Ocean.

Although the proposal was not initiated by New Delhi, the idea of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace had found a particular resonance in India. For the Indian political elite, so committed to the values of liberal internationalism, the talk of a 'power vacuum' in the region was crass and reflected the outmoded European thinking about international politics.

For many Indians, the zone of peace was a continuation of the anti-imperialist struggle to rid the Indian Ocean of the ruinous great power intervention and rivalry that had gone on for centuries. Thirty years after the British quit as top cops on the Indian Ocean beat, the idea of the zone of peace in the littoral remains elusive as ever. The notion of collective security – the idea of one for all and all for one – among the littoral states lies in shambles. Instead, the traditional factors of international politics such as military alliances, great power security guarantees and balance of power have become the dominant themes of the political order in the Indian Ocean. Even more galling for the promoters of the zone of peace idea is that the Indian Ocean has, for all practical purposes, become an American lake. The power vacuum left by the British, after more than a century of dominance, has now been filled by the United States.

It is not that the Indian and non aligned diagnosis of the impending dangers in the Indian Ocean was wrong. Only the solution – conceived in terms of demilitarizing and denuclearizing the Indian Ocean and thus avoiding great power rivalry – had no real chance of being realized. As the salience of the Indian Ocean region in world affairs increased since the 1960s, the worst fears of the littoral nations in the Indian Ocean came true. With the process of decolonization gathering momentum in the 1960s the cold war at the centre of the international system had a powerful impact on the region

The contest between Washington and Moscow – not always equal or symmetric, with the latter providing a challenge to western dominance despite its limited resources – to win friends and influence in the region became intense China too emerged as a power player in the region, its intervention couched in the ideological fervour of Maoism and its determination to export a radical version of communism to the Afro-Asian states.

The political leaders of the region proved to be quick learners in the fine art of pitting one great power against the other, and mobilizing powerful external support to beef up their own regimes against the perceived external and internal threats. In return, many newly independent nations were prepared to offer valuable military bases and other facilities to the great powers in the conduct of their rivalries This, of course, undermined the very essence of the zone of peace idea. Arms transfers and related military assistance became an important tool for the great powers to build lasting relationships with the ruling elites of the region. Arms transfers also laid the basis

a real militarization of the littoral ieties, not just in terms of acquisition ever larger armaments, but in boosting s political role of the military and in ving them vital control over the distri- tion of domestic resources.

The negative trends of integration o the global cold war structures and ternal militarization, which came into w in the 1960s, took deep root in the rly 1970s even as the non-aligned mour for declaring the Indian Ocean zone of peace reached its peak. The amatic oil price increases in the 1970s vealed a global dependence on the rsian Gulf for energy security, and tensified the East-West competition for fluence in the Middle East. Arms trans- rs to the region acquired a new inten- ty, with the sale of some of the most phisticated weapons in unprecedented antities to the Persian Gulf states. Arms ansfers also became the principal ehicle to recycle the abundant petro- ollars. In the 1970s, though the United tates had to face a humiliating defeat in ietnam, it steadily increased its naval resence in the Indian Ocean and stepped p its military responsibilities for the ecurity of the Persian Gulf states

During the decade, Moscow's own influence appeared to expand through intensified strategic cooperation with a number of key states in the region through peace and friendship pacts. The 1970s also saw the integration of the Indian Ocean into the structure of global nuclear competition between the United States and the Soviet Union, with the introduction of naval nuclear weapons and associated infrastructure into the region.

Washington and Moscow sought to regulate their naval competition in the Indian Ocean through bilateral negotiations in the late 1970s, but without success. In the end, the political developments in the region were to undermine East-West detente at the global level, particularly the prospect of global arms control. The liberation of Indo-China, and the revolutions in Afghanistan, Yemen and Portuguese southern Africa appeared to indicate a grand strategic turn in the 'correlation of forces' towards the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean region during the mid-1970s.

These developments were seized by the conservatives in the United States to question the utility of arms control and detente with Moscow The Vietnamese intervention to throw out the genocidal Pol Pot clique in Cambodia, Russian military intervention in Afghanistan and Cuban assistance to the national liberation movements in southern Africa, played right into the hands of the cold warriors in the U.S. who were determined to launch a new offensive against the Soviet Union. The Islamic revolution in Iran and the overthrow of Shah Reza Pahlavi – a pillar of American strategy for dominance and control of the Persian Gulf – capped the dramatic events of the 1970s in the Indian Ocean region

The second cold war of the 1980s killed all residual prospects for transforming the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace. The decade saw intense strategic activism by the United States in the region that put Moscow on the defensive and resulted in the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union through prolonged bleeding The United States strengthened its political alliances in the region – including the creation of a strategic consensus with China – and stepped up arms transfers to the new 'frontline' states such as Pakistan. It created a Rapid Deployment Force for direct intervention in the Persian Gulf. It also unveiled the 'Reagan Doctrine' of using the regional proxies and insurgencies to squeeze Moscow and its allies.

In Cambodia, Afghanistan, and Southern Africa the heat was turned on pro-Soviet regimes. In the Persian Gulf, the 'Republican' Saddam Hussein of Iraq was set up against the Islamic hordes of Khomeini. The 'Reagan Doctrine' significantly contributed to the defeat and roll-back of the Soviet Union. But it also brutalized the regional conflicts in the Indian Ocean. It divided and paralyzed the non-aligned movement as it sought to cope with the new cold war in the region It accentuated conflicts among and within littoral states of the Indian Ocean. If the cold war ended with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in Europe, it ended with a bigger bang in the Indian Ocean, when the United States destroyed Iraq in the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91

The Gulf War shattered the remaining myths about collective security in the Indian Ocean. The nations of the region were incapable of reversing Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait No regional power or a local coalition had either the diplomatic clout or military strength to undo the Iraqi aggression. It took the unprecedented mobilization of the military power of the United States to restore the sovereignty of Kuwait. The Gulf War reinforced the truism that it is military alliances – not the rhetoric about collective security – that provide security to the weak states in the international system who cannot defend themselves against stronger neighbours

The end of the cold war and the Gulf War has seen a significant transformation of the American role and presence in the Indian Ocean. Unlike in the past, when its strategy was at least partly conceived in terms of great power rivalry, it is now wholly aimed at preserving regional stability and in controlling threats to its vital interests from local powers. The United States has also undertaken direct military responsibility for the security of its allies in the Arabian peninsula.

Given the basic inability of the oil-rich but politically weak regimes of the peninsula to defend themselves, and the absence of any regional power that can provide such security commitments, these regimes must be expected to depend upon the United States for their security for a long time to come. This destroys, whether we like it or not, the core principles of the zone of peace idea in the Indian Ocean. Unlike in the past, when the weak states of the region were willing to fudge the question of military bases, many of them in the Gulf are now ready to accept the permanent military presence of outside powers to ensure their survival.

Unlike elsewhere in the world, the U.S. presents its interests in the Gulf in a raw and recognizable form There is no

attempt to wrap them up in such exalted ideals as human rights and promotion of democracy. The Clinton administration has identified them as follows. maintaining the free flow of oil at reasonable prices; ensuring the freedom of navigation and access to commercial markets; assuring the security of American citizens abroad; and promoting the survival of friendly regimes. How does it propose to defend these interests which are 10,000 km away from its shores?

The U.S. Central Command that has operational responsibility for the military pursuit of American political interests in the Gulf has delineated the principal elements of its strategy in the Persian Gulf. These are power projection, forward military presence, combined military exercises, security assistance, and a readiness to fight. As part of this strategy, the U.S has significantly expanded its naval presence in the Indian Ocean. For the first time since the end of the Second World War, it has created a new fleet command called the Fifth Fleet to rationalize American naval operations in the Indian Ocean. At one point, in September 1995, the strength of the Fifth Fleet had risen to 43 ships in the area, the largest number since the end of the Gulf War. But its normal strength is around 25 ships and 15,000 sailors and marines According to the Central Command, the fleet typically includes an aircraft carrier battle group, an amphibious group, surface ships, submarines, maritime patrol aircraft, logistic ships and fleet support activity.

The United States has no formal defence treaties with its Gulf allies. Instead it relies on a series of bilateral security arrangements with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, most of them negotiated after the Gulf War. Because of domestic political compulsions, Saudi Arabia has declined to sign such an agreement, even though U.S.-Saudi defence ties are stronger than American ties with any other Gulf state, barring Kuwait. American security cooperation with Riyadh is based instead on informal arrangements.

The United States has prepositioned heavy military equipment in the Gulf in order to quickly respond to military threats to its allies in the Gulf. Kuwait has agreed to preposition equipment for a mechanized brigade, and the U.S. is negotiating similar agreements with Qatar and the UAE. Oman allows the U.S. to use its air bases and to maintain intelligence-gathering facilities. Bahrain serves as the regional headquarters for the U S. Central Command and for the U.S. Fifth Fleet Saudi Arabia allows American air force units on rotational deployment to constitute a virtual permanent presence in the Kingdom. The United States sharpens its military presence with a range of joint military exercises in the region. According to the U.S. Central Command, in the fiscal year 1995 it conducted about 85 air, ground, naval and special operations exercises in the region. By any measure, this impressive military presence drove the last nail into the coffin of the proposal to declare the Indian Ocean a zone of peace

A somewhat different evolution of security structures is taking place at the eastern end of the Indian Ocean littoral. The United States remains the principal power broker in the Asia-Pacific region that overlaps with the Indian Ocean complex and has reiterated its determination to retain a military presence of at least 100,000 troops in the region to ensure stability and order. In the late 1980s, the United States had to withdraw from the Philippines, one of its largest overseas naval bases. However, it has made the requisite adjustments to maintain its military presence and has stepped up its access and regular military exercises with the Southeast Asian countries

In the eastern part of the Indian Ocean, unlike its north western quadrant, the security threats to the United States after the cold war have been less immediate and direct. Given this less tense atmosphere, Washington has promoted a broad framework of 'security multilateralism' in the regions through institutions, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) which facilitates military consultations and confidence-building measure among the ASEAN states, the regiona powers and the great powers.

Such multilateralism should not however, be mistaken as a beginnin towards collective security in the easten part of the Indian Ocean. It is rooted in a American balance of power strategy tha aims at preventing the rise of any singl power or a coalition that can threate American interests in Asia. The U.S. le security multilateralism in the Asia Pacific region is actually a holding opera tion to manage the current flux in th political environment of the region. I seeks to engage China – the emergin dominant power of Asia – in a broade security framework and constrain it political ambitions. The American secu rity multilateralism in Asia is creatin building blocks for a future containmer of China should such a need arise in th future.

Even as it promotes securit multilateralism, the United States is reir forcing its traditional alliances in th region. In April 1996, during Presider Clinton's visit to Tokyo, the United State and Japan re-emphasized the importanc of their military alliance for Asian secu rity. Later in July, the United States an Australia announced plans to strengthe bilateral military cooperation. In th words of the U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry, Japan is the 'norther anchor' and Australia the 'souther anchor' in the American security struc tures in Asia/Pacific. We must expect tha military alliances, not collective securit will remain the cornerstone of politica order in the eastern part of the India Ocean.

American strategic dominance i the Indian Ocean is now a reality. Nev ertheless, we must ask ourselves, ho stable the current order in the region i A number of factors are at work her While none may undermine the Amer can hegemony in the near future, the could generate many instabilities Firstl the concept of the region itself has bee transformed since the collapse of th Soviet Union. The emergence of ne

resource-rich nations in Central Asia and the Caucasus has given rise to the notion of a 'Greater Middle East', popularly identified by Islam, oil, weak states and a potential for unending internal and regional conflict, and great power intervention. Oil politics has always driven strategy in the Indian Ocean. Similarly, the opening up of new energy resources in and around the Caspian Sea has introduced an interesting but unpredictable dimension to the future conflict in the region.

Secondly, not a single great power today can fundamentally threaten the preponderance of the United States in the Indian Ocean. However, within the framework of American dominance, other great powers are likely to indulge in manoeuvres to promote their own interests.

The European powers and Japan have competing economic interests with the United States which often result in the pursuit of independent policies by the lesser powers. France, for example, has struck out on its own in the Middle East and both Germany and Japan have pursued their economic interests in Iran despite American protestations Moscow, which had withdrawn from contesting American hegemony, can play the spoiler in the Gulf and Central Asian regions and has an influential role in shaping the outcome of oil politics. China has steadily expanded its strategic profile in the Gulf through military, nuclear and missile transfers to the region, often complicating the American agenda. In the eastern part of the Ocean, Beijing has a more central role and the nature of the evolution of China, as well as its relations with the United States, could be the single most important factor in determining the strategic evolution of this region.

Thirdly, there has been an enormous increase in the military capabilities of the regional powers in the Indian Ocean over the last three decades. Many small Gulf states have accumulated huge military arsenals. There is a similar build-up underway in Southeast Asia. India, Pakistan and Iran have embarked on a steady accretion of their military capabilities, with a significant capacity for military intervention in their neighbourhood and an increasing political will to pursue strategic interests abroad.

At the higher level, there is a spread of advanced strategic capabilities, including nuclear and missile technologies among the countries of the region. This has significantly affected American foreign and national security policies, now acutely focused on preventing proliferation. The Pentagon has also announced a greater readiness to use military means to curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction. The rise of regional powers shakes the established framework for analysing the Indian Ocean in terms of 'north versus south' or by focusing on great power military intervention. The emerging powers are now ready to assume greater strategic burdens and factor them into the balance of power calculus, at least at the sub-regional level.

Fourthly, after a period of relative quiet since the Gulf War, the Middle East now appears to be getting ready for a new bout of instability. The Arab-Israeli peace process is going through a difficult moment after the recent elections in Israel, while the ruling elites in the Middle East are under great stress. Reduced oil revenues, population pressures and growing social and political restiveness are taxing the current capabilities for governance in the region. Messianic forces, espousing anti-secular and anti-western ideologies, are gaining ground and threaten destabilization. The heart of the Gulf oil wealth – Saudi Arabia – appears to be on the verge of a major political convulsion, and has seen increasingly bold terrorist attacks on American military targets in the country.

The United States is beginning to experience the unpleasant consequences of its enviable domination of the Middle East. The American policy of dual containment – of simultaneously squeezing the two largest states in the Gulf, Iran and Iraq – has begun to reveal its limits and contradictions The overthrow of Saddam Hussein has proved difficult, and the isolation of Iran unworkable. In Southeast Asia, too, the tranquillity of the last many decades appears hard to sustain. While the region has seen enormous gains in terms of economic prosperity, there are important sources of instability. A question mark hangs over the future of the largest state in the region – Indonesia. Can it make a peaceful transition towards democracy after three decades of iron rule by General Suharto?

Fifthly, the politics of oil and energy security is likely to have a powerful impact on the strategic dynamic of the Indian Ocean Most significantly, energy security could bring about a new strategic interdependence between the eastern and western parts of Asia, the consequences of which are unpredictable. The rapid economic growth in Asia is going to fuel a massive demand for energy, particularly oil. China, which has been an exporter of oil, is now an importer. Indonesia, some argue, could go the same way and Japan has always been a large oil importer As East Asia becomes more dependent on oil from the Persian Gulf, the importance of sea lanes through the Indian Ocean is bound to increase.

According to one estimate, the volume of oil flowing through the Straits of Malacca will increase three-fold in the next 15 years. As economic growth picks up in South Asia, Indian and Pakistani imports of oil from the Persian Gulf will rise rapidly. Gaining secure access to oil sources, protecting the sea lanes and investing in naval forces could re-emerge as important strategic priorities for the great powers as well as the emerging powers in the Indian Ocean. This raises many disconcerting questions Will the United States remain the sole *gendarme* of the sea lanes and the sources of oil in the Indian Ocean? What political price will it extract in return for providing this service? Can the United States sustain its ability to police the region on its own? Or will it be prepared to share the burden with other powers in the region? Given its expanding stakes in the Indian Ocean, what alliances will China develop in the littoral? Will the American nightmare of an alliance between the Islamic and Sinic civilizations materialise?

A revival of the debate on the Indian Ocean is long overdue. After years of being at the centre of the Indian debate on foreign policy in the 1970s and early 1980s, it had virtually disappeared from the agenda. It is also appropriate that the initial focus is on economic cooperation, and on building the long disrupted commercial relations among the nations of the littoral It is understandable that India does not at this stage want a multilateral discussion of the security issues in the new Indian Ocean forums that are being created India is a long way from forging an internal consensus on what kind of policy it must adopt to protect its security interests in the Indian Ocean.

It is not that Indian policy has remained unchanged. In the last few years, it has pursued a policy of 'Looking East', seeking greater economic and political cooperation with the ASEAN. India has now become a 'full dialogue partner' of the ASEAN, and has also joined its military wing, the ARF Political adjustments have been less obvious in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. It has opened wide-ranging cooperation, including defence interaction, with Israel and has often talked about developing a special relationship with Iran. Nevertheless, the Indian thrust towards the Middle East has been tentative and its initiatives towards Central Asia have not been followed up. India has also shed its military isolationism, adopted since the mid-1960s, and initiated wide-ranging military interaction and service-to-service contacts with the United States and other great powers as well as regional actors.

As India rethinks its policy towards the Indian Ocean, the principal adjustment must be conceptual. This involves a fundamental shift in emphasis from collective security to balance of power The legacy of a prolonged national movement was responsible for an Indian emphasis on liberal internationalist principles in the articulation of its foreign and national security policies. The certitudes of the cold war had allowed it the luxury of condemning the great powers for their intervention in the Indian Ocean, prescribing normative solutions and supporting impractical proposals. Ideas such as a zone of peace have no real meaning today in the changed context of the Indian Ocean. Besides, India's own relative power position has steadily increased over the years, and there will be calls on it to make political commitments in resolving future regional conflicts

The political challenge before India is how to structure an effective balance of power that will at once protect its interests and bring a measure of stability to the Indian Ocean region. This is not going to be easy as it makes contradictory demands on foreign policy and calls for agility in policy-making that can cope with shifting coalitions, as well as a willingness to take political risks in making strategic commitments in different directions.

The quest for balance of power does not mean that India should participate in military alliance systems. India is now too big and committed to an independent foreign policy to become a junior partner in any alliance system. A variety of options and ideas have been discussed in recent years – strategic cooperation with the United States; revival of partnership with Russia; an alliance of India, China, Russia and Iran. But it is increasingly clear that none of these options is a realistic possibility.

In the absence of prospects for alliances that can secure India's interests, self-reliance and expansion of its own national capabilities remains the principal option for New Delhi. On the basis of its own increased military capabilities, India will be in a position to develop political leverage in different directions and join ad hoc, issue-based coalitions in implementing specific political objectives in the region. Only an expansion of national power would give the country the much needed flexibility to simultaneously engage all the great powers, freedom to pursue its interests in the region, often in defiance of the lines drawn by them. Finally, it will extend political assistance to the weak states that look towards New Delhi to resolve their own security dilemmas.

Changing laws of the sea

O P SHARMA

THE adoption of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982, marked the culmination of over 14 years of arduous work. It involved the participation of more than 150 states representing all regions of the world, with differing legal and political systems and degrees of socio-economic development.

The earlier efforts of the United Nations to codify rules of the law of the sea provided little encouragement since the international community which decided to convene the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) was, in quantitative terms, larger than the community which drew up the 1959 Geneva Conventions. Also, the kaleidoscopic diversity of its members made it, in qualitative terms, a new and different entity.

The prevailing mind-set at the conference to secure a new convention in the form of a comprehensive constitution for the oceans oscillated between hope and fear, between the concern to agree on new ways of peaceful coexistence and the constraints imposed by national interests, ideological and economic differences and, in some cases, by a misplaced attachment to traditional principles and concepts. Proving sceptics wrong, a convention covering every aspect of the uses and resources of the oceans came into force on 16 November 1994.

The convention establishes a comprehensive framework for the regulation of all ocean space. It contains provisions governing, *inter-alia*, the limits of national jurisdiction over ocean space, access to the seas, freedom of navigation, exploitation and conservation of living resources, protection and preservation of marine environment, scientific research, seabed mining and dispute settlement. In addition, it envisages the establishment of new international bodies for specific objectives. In short, the convention represents a monument to international cooperation in the treaty-making process and stands as testimony to the way in which the international community would like to structure its relations regarding ocean space.

There is no doubt that the UN Convention promotes the maintenance of international peace and security by replacing a plethora of conflicting claims by coastal states with universally agreed limits of various maritime zones and widely accepted rules, norms and standards. Nevertheless, one should not expect it to be a perfect document. There are several ambiguities in the convention which, combined with the attitude of states, may become a serious source of disputes in the new ocean regime.

This article provides a three-fold classification of the possible sources of

disputes and discusses them in the context of India: (*i*) Delimitation of maritime boundaries; (*ii*) Rights over islands; and (*iii*) Rights in the ocean space within national jurisdiction.

As maritime nations reach out to meet across the sea, a new source of international conflict which previously existed only on land· disputed frontiers. When coastal states maintained narrow coastal zones, delimiting the maritime boundary between adjacent and opposite states was relatively simple and the median or the line of equidistance sufficed to determine the boundary of national jurisdiction between the two states. By and large, the same principle has been adumbrated in the new convention over the delimitation of maritime boundary in territorial waters. With the evolution of the concept of an exclusive economic zone extending up to 200 miles from the shore and acceptance of an enlarged continental margin, a large number of new, opposite and adjacent boundary problems have been created. These could exacerbate into serious disputes where: (*a*) relations are already strained over issues relating to seabed or fisheries; (*b*) generally strained or troubled relations exist between states; or (*c*) in the context of complicated delimitation problems, such as those arising in enclosed or semi-enclosed seas.

India has maritime boundaries with seven adjacent and opposite states. Fortunately, India has managed to settle its maritime boundary with five opposite neighbours – Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Myanmar, Maldives and the tri-junction point with Thailand/Indonesia. But it has yet to delineate its maritime boundary with the two adjacent states of Bangladesh and Pakistan. By ascribing importance to equitable principles and not according primacy to the median line or the equidistance line, the formulation in the UN Convention constitutes an unfortunate departure from existing international law. In introducing reference to equitable principles the convention imports a large element of uncertainty into law, complicating the resolution of maritime boundary disputes and India will probably find it difficult to satisfactorily settle maritime boundaries with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The increasingly broad coastal state jurisdiction will inevitably lead to disputes over islands, since their ownership can increase the area under the control of a coastal state in two ways. Firstly, an island can serve as an anchor point from which to draw baselines and make claims to an exclusive economic zone or the continental shelf of a coastal state The evolution of the new ocean regime has thus greatly increased the incentive for states to establish their title to any island within reach, since islands which can sustain human habitation generate maritime zones and thus command enormous ocean space.

Moreover, islands will have a substantial effect on delimitation of boundaries between adjacent and opposite states and will be the main source of disputes involving them. The raising of a dispute by Bangladesh over the New Moore Island illustrates this. Other categories of disputes which might arise over islands relate to far-flung colonial islands still owned by Britain, the United States, France and Norway. Most of these islands are located in the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic Oceans and though many of them are too small to be viable as independent states, they potentially command enormous ocean space. Another category of disputes could relate to rocks or islets situated in resource-rich areas which states could use as the basis for establishing control over resources.

The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea has succeeded to a remarkable degree in resolving some fundamental questions. Its provisions with respect to traditional uses of the oceans generally confirm to maritime law and practice, and balance the interests of all states fairly. The convention has thus brought order to an increasingly disordered environment and protected the range of maritime freedoms essential to naval mobility. The regime of unimpeded transit passage through straits used for international navigation fully meets India's securi and navigational concerns. Similarly, t convention's regimes on abatement a control of marine pollution, marine s entific research and the Internation Seabed Area are in accord with our nati nal interests. Thus the convention, by a large, is conducive to the protection India's strategic interests

Notwithstanding this, there a several ambiguities in the conventi which, combined with the attitude most coastal states which are more inte ested in assertion of rights rather than acknowledging obligations, may po serious problems for India and give ri to potential conflicts. These are elaborat below.

Baselines have assumed particul importance because all maritime zon of territorial waters, contiguous zone exclusive economic zones and contine tal shelfs are measured from them. The lines also mark the outer limits of inte nal or inland waters over which a coast state exercises full sovereignty. The co vention confirms that the normal bas line is the low water mark line along t coast A coastal state is allowed to de ate from this norm and to establish straig baselines only when this is consistent wi the stringent criteria laid down in Artic 7 of the Convention

Bangladesh had made a concert effort at the third UNCLOS that it l allowed to draw straight baselines terms of certain depths as its coastli was deeply indented and unstable wi the emergence of many offshore islanc The conference, however, did not acce the Bangladeshi proposal of drawi baselines expressed in terms of dep contour. In defiance of the conventic Bangladesh has gone ahead and promu gated a straight baseline system in co travention of its provisions which w have serious implications for freedom navigation and delimitation of maritir boundary between Bangladesh and neighbouring coastal states. Indi Myanmar and other major maritime po ers have lodged diplomatic protests. Th provision of the convention has the pote

ıl of creating serious conflict situation :tween India and Bangladesh.

On the eve of the third UNCLOS, ndia had reappraised her position and pted for a less restrictive regime of sub- cting the passage of foreign warships rough the territorial waters. While ndia argued only for the requirement of ior notification, all its neighbouring)astal states (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri anka and Myanmar) have stipulated a :quirement for prior authorization and otification for the passage of foreign 'arships through their respective territo- al seas. The UN Convention is silent on is issue. Proposals on this subject made y a group of states had to be withdrawn ecause of vehement opposition from ajor maritime powers. The President f the conference assured the states that eir withdrawal is without prejudice) the right to safeguard their security terests.

It is regrettable that the conference)st a valuable opportunity to settle this ncertainty in law on the passage of for- ign warships through the territorial /aters of a coastal state. The issue may nus become a potential conflict point with eighbouring coastal states. Indeed, dif- iculties have already arisen regarding he passage of Indian warships through ri Lanka's Pedro Channel and the his- oric waters in the Palk Bay, when it ought to impose the requirement of prior onsent or authorization for the passage)f Indian warships through Lankan erritorial waters in accordance with its naritime legislation This issue remains nresolved

The 1976 Indian Maritime Zones Act prescribes 'security' as one purpose or which a contiguous zone may be laimed. It was included in anticipation)f its endorsement by the third UNCLOS. Surprisingly, however, India had not :ven mentioned 'security' as one of the)urposes for which a contiguous zone nay be established in the general state- nents espousing this concept This :voked protest from some of the major naritime powers and is thus a conten- ious issue

Another contentious area concerns the availability of navigational rights in the exclusive economic zone. The convention expressly enjoins that there shall be complete freedom of navigation, communication, laying of submarine cables and pipelines, and all other freedoms relating to navigation and communication which are internationally recognized. However, Indian concern about navigation in the exclusive economic zone stems from a gradual erosion of the agreed solutions as is evident from the declarations or interpretative statements made by some states while ratifying the convention. These qualifying statements mostly relate to controlling military manoeuvres or overflight rights in the EEZ. If our neighbouring states were to take a cue from them, it would give rise to a serious situation.

One of the distinct achievements of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is the evolution of a new right of unimpeded transit passage through a strait used for international navigation Greece, Iran and Spain have made claims inconsistent with the provisions of the convention. Although India is not a strait state, having no narrow passage or a strait off its coast, the erosion of settled navigational rights could lead to conflictual situations in the Indian Ocean which would have serious repercussions on naval mobility.

The UN Convention has sanctified the concept of an archipelago, defined as a group of islands including parts of islands, inter-connecting waters and other natural features which are so closely inter-related that such islands, waters and other natural features form an intrinsic geographical, economic and political entity, or which historically have been regarded as such. India was unable to pursuade the conference to accord the status of an archipelago to a group of islands of a continental coastal state such as the Andaman and Nicobar islands or the Lakshadweep group of islands. The convention grants the status of an archipelago only to those groups of islands that are political entities by themselves like Indonesia, Philippines or the Maldives The legal significance of granting archipelagic status to a group of islands is that the state concerned is able to draw straight baselines joining the outermost points of those islands, and the waters so enclosed become its archipelagic waters through which ships of all states enjoy the right of innocent passage

This has implications for the delimitation of maritime boundary between states. Fortunately, India has amicably settled its maritime boundary with both Indonesia and the Maldives; otherwise, if settled rights are revoked, as Philippines attempted to do, it could lead to conflicts between states in the Indian Ocean particularly in regard to navigational rights and settlement of maritime limits

It is evident that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea is a comprehensive document covering all aspects of the uses of the oceans. It not only codifies existing law but also contains many new and innovative concepts in international law evolved in response to the advance of technology and the demand of developing countries for greater international equity and distributive justice. The convention will promote the maintenance of international peace and security because it will replace a plethora of conflicting claims by coastal states with universally agreed limits

Notwithstanding this, the convention contains several ambiguous solutions and the meaning of the convention will evolve from state practice. Though a host of problems from these ambiguities can be imagined, on balance some of these inconsistencies may simply be routine teething pains for a major convention which took almost a decade to negotiate. It must be appreciated that the new law of the sea contained in the 1982 convention is not simply the result of a process of action or reaction among the most powerful countries, but the product of the will of an overwhelming majority of nations from all parts of the world, at different levels of development and with diverse geographical characteristics in relation to the oceans.

Patterns of conflict

BHASHYAM KASTURI

THE Indian Ocean, the world's third largest ocean and the only one to be named after a nation, washes the shores of Asia, Africa, Antarctica and Australia. Lying mainly in the southern hemisphere, this ocean has geo-strategic and geopolitical significance, containing as it does vast deposits of oil and natural resources with strategic choke points vital when considering the security issues.

The debate on maritime security is therefore important for analyzing the patterns of conflict that will emerge in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), which can be geographically defined by the constituent nations whose shores touch the Indian Ocean. More strictly, the oceanic region extends from South Africa in the west to the straits of Malacca in the east. The challenge facing the nations in the IOR is to find sustainable means of extracting resources from beneath the surface of the ocean without infringement of another nation's sovereignty. This challenge is all the more relevant as we shift our attention to the sea for resources to sustain growing populations. Geopolitical disputes may thus arise over several issues, ranging from conflict over resources, security of island states, disputes over maritime boundaries and the presence of extra-regional naval forces in the region.

The history of conflict in the IOR shows the importance of the maritime sphere and its sea lanes. The Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia and the American response during the Second World War was conducted mainly through naval forces and Japanese failure was partly due to the difficult lines of communication built on the island territories in the South Pacific. The Americans had to retake these one by one after the Battle of Midway in 1942.

The post-war decolonization of the IOR and the efforts by the U.S. to contain communism led to extra-regional linkages being built. Attempts by the superpowers to influence the geo-strategic environment in their favour and the lo responses led several countries in t region to seek extra-regional linkages a strategic partners to legitimize their ru This has contributed to the extension the cold war to the IOR.[1]

For all the efforts of the nations the IOR to declare the area a zone of peac the region has witnessed tension a conflict over several intra-state issues d to the presence of extra-regional power The main problem with declaring the ar a zone of peace lies in the inability nations to mutually agree on core issu which affect the security and develo ment in the region.[2]

The establishment of U.S. bases Southeast Asia gave it the opportuni to oversee security arrangements in t region. Their subsequent withdraw provided the possibility of other nation filling the vacuum. Recent events in t South China Sea and the Taiwan Strai demonstrate Beijing's growing interest maritime resources and the geopolitics c the region. ASEAN's main concern, on t other hand, is to find means of filling t security vacuum left by the United State The Persian Gulf War and its aftermat demonstrated that interest in extendin maritime power to the countries of t Gulf is an important consideration. A focus on oil shifts to Central Asia this ma extend to the east of the Gulf. Thus, t end of the cold war, rather than signallin the end of conflict in the IOR, has increase the possibility of different conflicts aris ing, like trade wars and intra-capitalis tensions.

The main source of conflict will b resources, particularly those available o the ocean floor. As man depletes more o land he will shift his attention to the sea At present rates of growth, the populatio

1 Jasjit Singh, 'The Indian Ocean – future chal lenges', *Indian Defence Review*, January 1987

2. Sudha Raghavan, *Indian Ocean Power Politics Attitudes of South-East Asian and South Pacific Countries* Lancer Books, 1996, p 430.

of the IOR is likely to be between one-fourth to one-third of the world's population by the end of the century. With depleting resources on land, oceans will become disputed territories for their wealth and their capacity to feed people.[3]

Several nations in the IOR lack the finances and technology to extract natural and mineral resources from the ocean. Therefore, international participation in such efforts will become inevitable and may, in turn, give rise to tensions over island territories, energy exploitation programmes and rights of passage through the region. The capacity of individual nations to harness in-house technological capability will determine the nature of resource management of the Indian Ocean. Additionally, a nation investing in the extraction of resources from the ocean must be prepared to secure her sea lanes and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to prevent ingress and attack. For instance, Indian off-shore oil platforms in the Arabian Sea could become a target for naval forces from the West. These could give rise to medium intensity conflicts.

The EEZ is an exclusive zone of maritime space for a nation to exploit for its mineral wealth and marine life. Since the definitional status and actual delimitation of these EEZs vary from country to country, disputes are bound to arise over exploitation of the resources within the EEZ or over international maritime boundaries.

The legal and topographical interpretations of boundaries allows for festering of disputes with the possibility of extension into actual conflict In the case of India, maritime boundaries with Pakistan and Bangladesh are most likely to create tension. While the problem with Bangladesh derives from a concave coast and is geographically difficult to resolve, the Pakistan dispute is based on a technicality as this boundary has geopolitical connotations which makes it more difficult to resolve.[4]

Island territories are significant geographic and strategic parts of nations in the IOR. These are important for economic, strategic or environmental reasons. The case of the Spratly Islands is illustrative of the tensions that can arise due to conflicting claims made by several countries including China. The islands contain huge oil reserves and straddle sea lanes through which 25% of the world's shipping passes. The exploration and utilization of the oil reserves forms the backdrop to the Chinese claim on the islands

The security of island territories, both independent and those forming part of a nation, is another important aspect These could become targets, like Diego Garcia, for extra-regional powers who constantly seek bases, and repair and maintenance facilities. Island territories on both sides of peninsular India are important for their strategic location and resource availability. The relevance of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to India's maritime security lies in their proximity to Southeast Asia and to the trade and shipping lanes of the IOR.

Two specific examples may be cited here. The channel between Sumatra and Nicobar (latitude 6 degrees North) is the main shipping route between the south of Sri Lanka and the Malacca Straits Similarly the 10 degree channel between Car Nicobar and the little Andamans controls all traffic between the south of Sri Lanka and Myanmar [5] Prevention of extra-regional naval ingress is therefore important for both economic and geo-strategic reasons India also has an interest in ensuring the security of small island states like the Maldives. The 1988 Indian intervention reflected this concern

Increased Chinese interest in Myanmar and the use of its ports for commercial and defence purposes is an indication of the type of ingress that needs to be noted. The threat is not of a direct India-China conflict arising from Chinese presence, but that this allows Chinese naval forces a stopping point in the Bay of Bengal, so important for naval forces attempting to attain blue water capability

The IOR region has witnessed rapid increase in maritime trade, making it necessary for traffic passing through the region to be secured against any threat. Interdiction of sea lanes, rights of passage and shipping can give rise to conflict between nations. Nations in the Asia-Pacific are growing both economically and militarily They are also dependent on oil supplies from West Asia, mainly through sea-borne commerce, making it imperative that sea lanes are safe and secure The sea lanes linking Japan with the Indian Ocean find tankers carrying 90% of the oil imported by Japan.[6] Thus, prevention of interdiction of this traffic prompts nations to expand naval forces. If a nation generally preserves its traffic along what Alfred Mahan called the 'well worn paths' and denies this privilege to the enemy, then it would command the sea Its trade would flourish and its overseas links maintained [7] To achieve this a nation must possess an adequate naval force

Moreover, the countries of the IOR face internal problems like insurgency, narco-terrorism and are plagued with the proliferation of small arms. The persistence of transnational terrorism implies that sabotage, hijack and smuggling is likely to increase as these acquire greater intra-state accessibility Narco-terrorism will intensify as smuggling becomes more sophisticated Just as the Gujarat and Maharashtra coast is used to bring explosives into India on the western seaboard, the LTTE uses the eastern sea route to bring in arms and ammunition from Southeast Asia This creates conditions for low-intensity conflict and the spread of this problem in the IOR will influence the security of nations and their responses to such transnational threats.

3 R H Tahiliani, 'Maritime Strategy for the Nineties', *Indian Defence Review*, July 1989, p 19.

4 K R Menon, Maritime Confidence Building in South Asia, in Jill R Junnola (ed), *Maritime Confidence Building in Regions of Tension* Henry L Stimson Center, Washington D C , 1996, p 78

5 B M Dimri, 'The Regime of Warships contemporary naval missions and activities and emerging law of the sea', Part II, *Indian Defence Review*, October 1993, p 72

6 Matin Zuberi, 'Sea of Contention', *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies* 3(1), November 1995, p. 29

7 Paul M Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* Allen Lane, 1976, p 2

At the lower end of the conflict spectrum we are likely to witness transnational subversion, introduction of a gun culture, destabilization of society and the creation of insurgent environments. Nations which find it difficult to understand the real nature of this problem may look for military solutions. Under such circumstances, intra-state conflict may transcend the low level and increase in intensity.

There is a strong influence of domestic conditions on security policies of nations in the region and the political milieu in several cases precludes active indigenisation of arms manufacture. This allows for extra-regional ingress in the form of arms transfers.

Arms transfer to the nations in the IOR persists despite the demise of superpower rivalry. Interests and old friendships endure, as nations continue to extend linkages for new purposes. The flow of arms and nuclear technology to the region, and within the region, is likely to see the persistence of the cold war environment. We cannot overlook the fact that Pakistan has again started acquiring American arms and equipment after the passage of the Brown amendment. This has affected Indian security perceptions (though exaggerated) and thus ensured continuance of a cold war in South Asia.

The confluence of resources and economics in the maritime sphere may give rise to different types of conflict. thus making all-round capabilities in maritime activity vital. The possibility of general war is remote, but medium level conflicts straining the resources of developing countries in the region are a possibility.

The two largest nations of the region – China and India – are likely to clash at some point in the future as both economies develop and search for outlets. This may not lead to a war in the classical sense but an economic conflict with a maritime dimension. Issues of resource sharing, market access and globalization of national interests will give rise to increasing tension.

Intra-state strife in future will transcend boundaries and yet test nations in their bid to maintain sovereignty. The pattern of conflict may take the shape of boundary disputes extending to conflicts over deep sea resource sharing. Legal and traditional claims to boundaries, for instance, could give rise to conflict without warning or take the form of interventions and gunboat diplomacy, if extended in time. Nations must thus be prepared for threats to their economic and military assets, both on and off-shore. Various forms of transnational terrorism such as sabotage, hijack and smuggling will continue to be low-level threats.

Low intensity conflict poses little direct danger to maritime forces in the IOR. But as the intensity of conflict increases naval forces will continue to provide C[4]I support, off-shore fire support, special forces insertion and rescue and evacuation in countering threats. Surveillance of the coast and beyond to prevent maritime influx of arms and explosives remains an on-going task of naval forces. The transition from low to medium intensity conflicts may be caused by extra-regional presence or by intra-state mistrust due to geo-strategic factors. Such a conflict will witness intense surface action against opposing navies and submarines. The scale of underwater operations will intensify as the number of patrol submarines operating in the IOR by 2002-2003 increases to around 40.[8] Naval forces in such a conflict will have an expanded mission including blockading harbours, induction of troops, mine-laying, surveillance of the air and maritime sphere, and control of the seas.

The future will witness increased participation in multi-national peacekeeping and peace-making missions, led by the United Nations. In such cases, maritime conflict may take place due to intervention and peace-making operations involving several countries. While prospects of general war in the region are remote, arms transfers to the nations of the IOR, issues of nuclear weaponisation and national threat perceptions and capabilities could initiate conflicts of medium intensity. The South Asian context of warfare is really an extension of land warfare to the maritime sphere. Perhaps the future will witness a reversal of this in the form of military attacks on shipping, maritime forces, assets both on and off shore, among others.

Technology will be a major factor influencing the character of conflict. This, of course, has to be seen in context. Developed nations have the technology to extract minerals from the ocean bed and to protect their interests. Most nations of the IOR are incapable of either. A shift in focus in the IOR on arms transfer related to surveillance technology and lending of satellite capability will enhance the naval potential of nations. Additionally, maritime forces armed with precision guided weapons will change the naval map of the future.

As demands on the ocean increase, so will its surveillance. Nations with satellite capabilties will be able to monitor surface movements of ships. With adequate sensor systems and electronic warfare systems the command of the sea will change in scale and time. Maritime reconnaissance capabilities will determine the ability of nations to be adequately warned against hostile intentions. The P-3C Orion for instance, gives naval forces technical and weapons capability for both early warning and strike. The underwater dimension will gain importance as submarines are generally immune to satellite surveillance

Alfred Mahan had prophesied nearly a hundred years ago that, 'Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas. In the 21st century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters.'[9]

The control of the Indian Ocean in future will partially be reflected in this classical formulation. It will also be reflected in the nation's ability to manage the ocean and its resources effectively. A failure to achieve this will sow the seeds of conflict.

8 Rahul Roy-Choudhury, 'Submarines in the Indian Ocean', *Maritime International* 1(5), May 1995, pp 14-15

9 Quoted in Jasjit Singh, op cit

A community in cooperation

KISHORE KUMAR

THE 'look east' strategy of South Africa and India, and the 'look west' policy of Australia has made the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) the hub of cooperation among the developing nations of the world. Even before the process of dismantling apartheid in South Africa got underway, the need for forging new linkages below the Tropic of Cancer dawned there: 'Among the most important southern powers likely to play an important role outside regional boundaries will be Brazil and Argentina, South Africa and Nigeria, and India and Australia' (Pik Botha, 1981). Linking more than 1.5 billion people and $250 billion of trade, including three of the world biggest emerging markets - India, Indonesia and South Africa - has obvious attraction.

Australia's Indian Ocean posture as distinct from its Pacific-oriented approach matched South Africa's turn from its exclusive South Atlantic policy. The mineral wealth of West Australia, its industrial products, export of agricultural products and oil imports from the Persian Gulf made a west-oriented outlook imperative. The Western Australian government is currently focusing on ways to develop trade and commercial relationship with the IOR. Constituting a gateway to the region, Perth has acquired the natural focus for such endeavours.

Australia's support for 'second track' regional cooperation was evident from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade establishing the Indian Ocean Centre at Curtin University in Perth. Richard Court's government of Western Australia has also provided generous support to the centre which facilitates academic and intellectual networking as well as pursuing the agenda of regional dialogue by hosting conferences, seminars and workshops.

The process of official and non-official dialogue concerning regional cooperation in the IOR took concrete form in 1995 when Mauritius hosted a seven nation official meeting to explore the modalities of regional cooperation. Apart from government representatives, aca-

demics and business leaders from Australia, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Oman, Singapore and South Africa were included in the delegations. Such consultations were deemed necessary to 'chart out a course of action leading to the formation of the IOR Grouping'. The delegates referred to the modalities that airlines and air travel agency operators in the region have evolved to establish an Indian Ocean Rim Tourism Organisation, and encourage operators in other sectors to adopt a similar approach. Independent working groups may soon be set up to identify issues to be addressed, the objectives to be attained and to propose an appropriate action plan. The M-7 Meet gave a kick-start to the process of cooperation.

Complementary to, and supportive of, the Mauritius process, Australia hosted the International Forum on the Indian Ocean Region (IFIOR) in Perth on 11-13 June 1995 The IFIOR represented a 'second track' (non-governmental) approach bringing together 122 participants from 23 Indian Ocean nations apart from regional organisations like ASEAN, GCC, Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), and the Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation (IOMAC). However, no country was represented by any official delegation The meeting was conducted through two working groups: one dealt with trade, investment and economic cooperation issues, while the other explored a range of other issues, such as maritime issues, environment, human resources and options of regional security dialogue. The Economic Working Group was attended by about two thirds of the participants, a reflection on the level of interest in economic cooperation. They agreed to establish an Indian Ocean Consultative Business Network and an Indian Ocean Research Network which held their meetings in New Delhi in December 1995.

These structures of Business Forum and Research Network have helped to develop views on regional economic cooperation and provide a network to draw regional researchers together in order to carry forward 'second track' policy development. They also provide the crucial building blocks for broader forms of regional cooperation that may develop in future. The August 1995 working group meeting on the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative (Port Louis, Mauritius) and the subsequent meetings of the Business Forum and Research Network in New Delhi in December 1995 reinforced such a belief in the emerging cooperative mechanism.

The geography of the Indian Ocean ensures that it is walled off on three sides: Asia forms the roof, and the whole stretch between the Cape of Good Hope to Cape Leeuwin (south-west tip of Australia) forms the vast expanse of this ocean. The land mass of the northern portion is accessible from both east and west through narrow straits. The tropical character of the ocean makes it free from various obstructions and the geographical situation modifies the rigours of climate, making the Indian Ocean navigable and ideal for maritime trade.

Forging an Indian Ocean community is no easy task. The sheer diversity that exists in the region makes this a slow and tedious process. With the exception of Australia, Singapore and, perhaps South Africa, all the countries of the region fall in the category of developing economies. The population diversity ranges from less than 100,000 in the case of Seychelles to nearly one billion in India Income levels range from less than $300 in Bangladesh, Mozambique and Tanzania to $20,000 plus per capita in Australia and Singapore. South Africa's high per capita income, on the other hand, is to some extent neutralised by poverty, unemployment and related violence.

The geographical realities of the Indian Ocean Region, and the policies and patterns obtaining there are defined by the fact that it is simultaneously rich and poor Its poverty is reflected in underdevelopment, overpopulation, illiteracy and abject health conditions. On the other hand, its richness derives from its resources, both land-based and oceanic. South Africa has significant reserves of chromite, gold, manganese, phosphates, uranium and diamonds. Zambia has about 7% of the world's copper reserves while Botswana has 13% of the world's natural industrial diamonds. The islands of Mauritius, Seychelles, Reunion and the Comoros also form part of southern Africa and are fast becoming export-based economies. The Gulf region has two-thirds of world's proven oil reserves in a zone extending from northern Iraq through the basins of the Tigris and Euphrates, and along the land bordering the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman

Much of Australia remains unexplored for minerals though it is already credited with more than 10% of the bauxite, iron ore, silver, zinc and industrial diamond reserves of the world. The failure to locate any significant reserve of oil and gas has made it a net importer of oil.

Almost two thirds of its exports to Asia and the ASEAN region is in fresh fruits, vegetables and other food products, a reason for being called the market garden for Asia. Southeast Asia's share of oil and gas, coal and other minerals is not significant, except for 70% of the world total of tin (mainly in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand), and modest nickel ore reserves. India has significant reserves of coal, iron ore, manganese and bauxite, whereas two-thirds of the total economically active population is accounted for by agriculture. Pakistan has almost no fossil fuel or non-fuel minerals, just a quarter of its land area is used for cultivation; and about two-thirds of total land area of Bangladesh is arable.

While cooperative mechanisms in the Indian Ocean Region depend largely on land-sea dynamics, ocean resources and other peaceful uses of the medium inject a vital impetus for regional cooperation. Even though many areas where cooperation is being worked out currently are land related, the oceans provide the new frontier for vital resources. The Indian Ocean has an area of about 75 million sq km, an average depth of 3,900 metres and volume of about 2,91,945 cu km. In the face of an unceasing scramble for land resources, and uncertainties and disputes attached to them, the break-

through in scientific oceanography came as a relief to mankind in its search for new sources of food, minerals and energy especially the International Indian Ocean Expedition (1960-65), a direct outcome of the International Geophysical year (1958-59). This expedition led to the formation of the National Institute of Oceanography in India in order to develop an information system related to the Indian Ocean. The NIO initiated two vitally important programmes – scientific expeditions to Antarctica, and explorations of deep seabed mineral deposits in the central Indian Ocean.

Fishery constitutes one of the oldest and most important human uses of the ocean, and has acquired increased significance in the light of protein requirements of a large part of the population in the ior. The region has a potential for harvesting more than 10 million tons including both pelagic and demersal fishery near the surface and the bottom respectively. Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Thailand and a number of islands states earn significant foreign exchange from this sector. In the case of India and other developing countries, almost the entire fish catch comes from within a 50 metre depth, but a number of non-regional nations take away significant amount from the EEZ of littoral states, largely in tuna fishery. Hence, formal agreements for distributing zones between regional and non-regional states (a la the Canada-European Union Agreement) to facilitate production through acquaculture and mariculture could constitute a major element in the future fishery policies of the Indian Ocean states.

Oil and gas is the biggest industry in the world today, given its use in transportation, and industrial and domestic sectors. In the IOR, the Persian Gulf region has the world's major proven oil reserves (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Iran and Iraq) with possibility of extensive undiscovered deposits. A major portion is exported to Japan and Australia. Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei are the major producers of oil in Southeast Asia with their offshore production increasing significantly in recent years. Due to rapid technological developments in seismic survey, exploratory drilling and field developments, as well as in onshore facilities, like support structures and installations, transportation, and refining and processing, future offshore production is likely to increase at a greater rate than land based oil production.

There are huge deposits of chemicals and minerals in seawater and on the seabed. Dissolved salts in seawater consist of chlorine, sodium, magnesium, sulphur, calcium and potassium. Also present in minute quantities are strontium, bromine, boron, iron and silicon. About 20% of the heavy water used today is of marine origin. The waters of South Africa, India, Mozambique (Zambesi), Tanzania and Sri Lanka have reserves of ilmenite, monazite, zircon, rulite and garnet. Deep waters contain other rare earth metals, but their low concentration and absence of cost-effective technology and equipment make their extraction currently uneconomical.

However, in the last quarter of the 19th century, a revolutionary discovery was made of potato-like nodular deposits called polymetallic nodules on the seabed. Their importance lies in their ability to scavenge relatively rare metals like copper, nickel and cobalt which find vital industrial applications in electrical industry, steel and alloys, aerospace and defence industries, auto emission control as well as purification of petroleum derivatives. There is a significant spread of nodules in the South Australian Basin, Central Indian Ocean, Mozambique, Seychelles and Madagascar basin and several other places Due to their horizontal spread on the ocean floor, they can be gathered just by scooping, dredging or suction (hydraulic or pneumatic). Using the hydrochlorination leaching process, wherein the nodules are crushed, dried and reacted with hydrochloric acid at a temperature of 1200C and above in multihearth furnaces, would yield significant quantities of these metals. With the development of technology and skills in this critical sector, oceans hold great promise in solving the problem of strategic metals, although commercial exploitation of nodules, sulphides and crusts still seems to be a far cry. The cost-benefit ratio and the institutional arrangements under the Seabed Authority are currently unfavourable even to the developed nations.

Oceans provide virtually limitless and thermally non-polluting sources of energy stored there by solar radiation, gravitational pull of the sun and the moon, and heat from the molten mass in the interior of the earth. Both the kinetic energy of moving water in waves, tides and currents, or energy inherent in vertical and lateral temperature, salinity and density gradients can be tapped. Of these, tidal motions have attracted greater attention, mainly because the principles involved are that of hydroelectric power generation. France built the first tidal power system at the La Rance estuary, followed by the former Soviet Union at Kislaya Gauba, Passamaquody Bay (USA), Bay of Fundy (Canada), Severn Estuary (UK), Solway Firth (Kimberly, Australia) among others. India has large tidal variations in the Gulf of Cambay and Kutch (Gujarat) and at the Ganga estuary at Sunderbans (West Bengal) Likewise, ocean thermal energy has great promise near the Laccadive Islands. Feasibility studies the world over have shown that the obstacles are more economic than technical. This is one area where countries like India, Australia and South Africa may envisage larger cooperation.

Several nations of the IOR have significant resources within their EEZ, but are still major importers of food and fuel. Except for the countries of the Gulf and Southeast Asia, most face a negative balance of payment placing them in a debt trap. Many of these countries are rich in natural resources, but lack the requisite capital, technology and skilled manpower to exploit them. On the other hand, the developed nations are dependent on the Indian Ocean Region for energy resources, metals and other strategic minerals. They thus, consider it important to control the flow and prices

of these resources. This has created a unique 'tug of war' situation. In the post-cold war era of 1990s, when many security concerns of the developing world are non-military in nature – economic development, ecology, trade and transit, refugee flow, and so on – it is today possible to respond to them through multilateral cooperation and forging a united front in international trade.

The 1990s provide great opportunities. The third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III), ratified in November 1994, expanded the national jurisdiction through the concept of 200 nautical miles of EEZ where the littoral states have the right to explore and exploit the resources of the ocean. Their rights with regard to the resources of the continental shelf may extend up to 300 miles and beyond in certain circumstances. Further, they get a share of the profits emanating from the resources of the deep seabed in the areas beyond national jurisdiction. However, most of the nations of the IOR have limited capabilities in maritime affairs such as finances, technology, skilled manpower and access to information. One also sees that external assistance has not been adequate or forthcoming.

The UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992) at Rio de Janeiro considered the 'coastal zone as an important facet of the land-sea interface and as a matter of critical importance to the management of global ecosystem and the oceans'. Chapter 17 of 'Agenda 21' deals with oceans and coasts whereby littoral states commit themselves to integrated management and sustainable development of coastal areas and marine environment under their jurisdiction. A-21 also calls for transfer of environmentally safe technologies, adoption of environmental protection and pollution control measures, and conservation of marine living resources. The UN Secretary General's Agenda for Peace and Development focuses on both economic and environmental security which includes ocean development and the Law of the Sea. Regional cooperation and organisation with proper linkages to national and global management, as well as interdisciplinary and transectoral approach are equally applicable to UNCLOS III, UNCED and the Secretary General's Agenda. Each presents new opportunities and challenges, making regional cooperation the prime necessity. While it might be too expensive and tedious for any single country to attempt such wide-ranging oceanic activities, these can be carried on a coordinated basis.

The new factors to have emerged due to extended jurisdiction under UNCLOS III relate to surveys and explorations, infrastructure development and maintenance (like ports), aquaculture and mariculture, energy resources, and so on. The role played by the oceans in global climatic balance, maritime shipping, strategic defence and resources points to the natural areas of cooperation in the region bringing countries together. South Africa's trade with Asia has increased manifold in the '90s. Its main seaports of Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth are on the eastern seaboard. So are the access ports for the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Dares-Salaam and Mombassa. India has already become a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and has doubled its trade with the region in the last four years. In the light of the post-1991 economic reforms and structural adjustments, she hopes to improve her international competitiveness The level of technological development and expertise in various fields of ocean sciences and engineering in India will prove to be an asset for the IOR.

One of the biggest miracles of recent times has been the rapid growth rate of Southeast Asian nations. Singapore has been recognised by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as a developed economy. The revenues from its port and business centres ensure a very high GNP per capita, ahead of Britain and New Zealand. Malaysia too, with its high growth rate of 8%, provides a vital link with ASEAN. Australia as a developed island state depends on the Indian Ocean route for much of its commerce. Access to Japan and other parts of Asia is over the Indian Ocean's eastern reaches and through several Southeast Asian straits. Its trade with Asia has been a fast growing sector, particularly 'clean green food-stuff' – fresh fruit, vegetables and horticultural products. Its invention of refrigerated container transport (active packaging) took high value, time-sensitive export of fresh green products away from expensive air-freight, making the country a market garden for Asia.

Maritime trade and commerce is today hampered by the problem of unsafe shipping, an area in which regional cooperation should form the top agenda. It is a matter of grave concern that the world's fleet of dry bulk carriers and tankers remains over-age and unsafe. The world today is largely at the mercy of the free market, wherein unscrupulous owners outside state control choose to avail of the benefits arising from tax avoidance, law evasion and lack of compliance with international safety conventions. The number of tanker and dry carrier accidents in the last few years have shown that the existing system of international regulations and control of shipping needs reformation. Since the 1980s, about 40% of world shipbuilding capacity has closed down. Nearly $400 billion risk capital would be needed to repair and refurbish and bring back world shipping to a safe state by the turn of the century. Otherwise, 'implications for world trade would be devastating' as freights may quadruple due to change in the equation of supply-demand, especially in low value exports of raw material and unprocessed commodities.

The end of the cold war unleashed powerful economic forces aimed at global competition and expansion of trade. A number of regional blocs of free trading nations have been formed to obtain increased economies of scale in terms of preferred market access and to attract foreign investments. The IOR too has a number of such sub-regional bodies: ASEAN, SAARC, ECO, GCC, SADC and so on. However, the IORI, to be renamed the Indian Ocean Rim Association for

Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), attempts to take a broader vision of the region and its strong points. The ASEAN free trade area (AFTA) was formed to attract foreign direct investments but it was in the context of relations with the developed world. Not that this is not important but, considering the sub-systems within the IOR, for instance the Persian Gulf sub-system which has tremendous influence on international political economy, an Indian Ocean cooperation mechanism acquires increased relevance.

A fairly ambitious programme of cooperation has been envisaged at the 'track two' level meets in the last few months. At specific sectoral levels, these relate to agriculture, trade, joint ventures, food processing and biotechnology, technology financing and entrepreneurship development, among others. This would require the forging of preferential trading arrangements, and finally the establishment of a free trade area. This, in turn, would require reduction of tariff and non-tariff barriers. Interactions among Chambers of Commerce and Industries for networking and updating the data base is the right step in order to achieve parity with advanced nations and blocs.

There are, however, two issues that urgently need to be addressed. The Indian Ocean region overlaps sub-regional associations and they must not work against each other. Rather, the IOR-ARC should act as a building block to multilateralism and intra-regional trade, leading to economic integration. IOMAC and IOC could not really take off as they addressed narrow priorities, the former only on maritime science and technology but ignoring important littoral nations, while the latter concentrated on development of tuna fishery at the initiative of France, EU and Japan. However, this does not imply that the Association should not look beyond IOR. This constitutes the second point to be considered. With South Africa and Australia as strong pillars of the emerging bloc, a long reach across the Atlantic and into the Pacific region would be desirable in the long run. This could form the bedrock of the whole concept: Cooperation with one does not mean confrontation with the other.

India in Antarctica

ARVIND MITRA

MAN'S interest in Antarctica charts a wide canvas. The early years were a time of adventure, exploring the obscure mysteries of a continent lying at the globe's extreme southern fringe. This phase was marked by the extraordinary courage, dedication and perseverance of explorers and scientists, some of whom perished in their pursuit. Not for nothing has this been called the 'historic age of exploration'. By the end of the two wars, Antarctica's obscurity had virtually disappeared, paving the way for a 'land rush' with territorial claims being made by several states over a continent that was no longer isolated. A principal concern was to determine the location and number of stations maintained by each nation The international tensions created by these claims even led to deployment of warships!

Against this potentially explosive background, the successful neutralisation of the political tension in Antarctica was achieved through a series of deliberations on scientific cooperation in the International Geophysical Year of 1957-58, resulting in the signing of the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) in Washington on 1 December 1959. This treaty is a unique example of international diplomacy built around the pursuit of science for peaceful purposes. For reasons of their own, the original 12 signatory states agreed to put aside their political, military and legal preoccupations for an unlimited period to establish Antarctica as a continent free for scientific research. The continent was solely dedicated to peaceful purposes (Article I) It was agreed to demilitarise and denuclearise Antarctica (Articles I

and V), and not to press (although, equally, not to surrender) their conflicting views over territorial sovereignty in Antarctica (Article IV). The treaty opened the way for feedom of scientific cooperation and research in Antarctica on a long term basis (Articles II and III), and went on to provide (Article IX) for the essentially scientific and peaceful principles and objectives of the treaty to be pursued at regular meetings, now known as the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings (ATCM). The attending states were known as Consultative Parties and at the centre of the ATS there were Consultative Parties who had a steering function. This included making specified recommendations to governments on measures to further the principles and objectives of the treaty

Antarctica's future is rooted in the Antarctic Treaty System and the developments which flow from it. For the last 35 years this treaty has provided a stable framework for human activities in Antarctica, making available valuable scientific information for the benefit of posterity. At present, there are 42 signatory states to this treaty of which 26 enjoy a consultative status.

The Antarctica treaty system has worked well all these years and the only point of difference has been the call by several countries to introduce a universalised regime for Antarctica under the United Nations. The original treaty members are reluctant to negotiate the existing institution governing Antarctica. There is a need to look at the global protection of the icy continent to reduce confrontations over ideological principles. The provisions of the 1959 treaty preclude any military activity on Antarctica and reject the use of its land mass for nuclear explosions

Only Article VI[1] leaves some room for contention. Given the increasing spread of technology in the skies, naval forces will be forced to shift their focus underwater. This could result in the misuse of Antarctica for concealing nuclear submarines. The 1982 Falklands war demonstrated the difficulty in participating in wars far from a home base In this sense, confrontation over sectors of Antarctica is unlikely to take place. The present status of global endeavour on Antarctica produces disagreement over means rather than ends. The desire to avoid confrontation and possible collapse of the present system has led nations to moderate their views at international fora.

India's advent into the realm of polar science began with its first ever scientific expedition landing on the icy continent on 9 January 1982. While the country was consolidating the achivements of the first two expeditions and planning to launch a third, confirming its sustained interest and capabilities to conduct front-ranking Antarctic science, it was admitted to the Antarctic Treaty System on 19 August 1983. Later, on 12 September of the same year, it was granted a consultative status. Following this, India's first over-wintering base in Antarctica, Dakshin Gangotri (DG), a brain-child of the late Indira Gandhi, was established on the ice shelf off the Princess Astrid Coast in the Dronning Maud Land of Antarctica. The task of site selection and construction of the station was achieved in a record eight weeks during January–February 1984. This heralded the beginning of a new era in polar science for India, enhancing national prestige and contributing towards her confirmation as a consultative nation among the Antarctic treaty signatories. It also led to her admission into the prestigous Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) on 1 October 1984. India was thus the 13th country to set up a permanent over-wintering base for conducting year-round scientific activity, and the 15th to get full ATS membership. She thus became the second Asian nation after Japan to achieve this feat.

The foundation of Indian polar science were based on her first permanent station, Dakshin Gangotri. Though the structural components of this station were prefabricated and imported, nevertheless their erection and commissioning was a daunting task. This was successfully accomplished during the third expedition, paving the way for the first wintering over by an Indian team of 12 members. From the third to the eighth expeditions the citadel in ice – GD – saw six summer and wintering teams use it as a laboratory to launch, consolidate and imprint the Indian signature in Antarctica. Experiments in the fields of climatology and meteorology, biology and oceanography, geology and geophysics, engineering and communication were initiated and conducted by scientists from a host of national institutes and laboratories.

The DG was decommisioned in 1990, having outlived its utility as a lab, and converted into a supply base. The expertise and knowledge gained in low temperature structural engineering was applied in building the wholly indigenous second Indian station Maitri. Logistic support to Maitri is rendered by both land convoys using a fleet of all-terrain vehicles and air support provided by helicopters The latest techniques of waste management and disposal are followed in the station, thus minimising damage to Antarctica's fragile ecosystem. The station is uplinked through an efficient system of SATCOM and HF network, including an e-mail interface for data transfer and voice communication.

The policy of the Department of Ocean Development (DOD), the nodal agency responsible for planning and execution of Indian Anatrctic expeditions, is entrusted with the responsibilty to conduct a carefully balanced and optimum programme of front-ranking science to maintain an active, authoritative and influential Indian presence in Antarctica. The DOD constantly evolves scientific programmes – mainly in consultation with national laboratories and institutes – which respond to both national and international changes and priorities to effectively use Antarctica as a unique laboratory of science.

1. Art VI 'The provisions of the present Treaty shall apply to the area south of 60° south latitude... but nothing in the presnt Treaty shall prejudice or in any way affect the rights of any state under international law with regard to the high seas within that area

India cannot offer to ignore the important gains of her Anatarctic missions. In the post cold war scenario, after the closure of former East German station Georg Foster and reduction in the scientific activities of the Russian station Novolazarezvyka, the Indian station assumes pre-eminence as the only active base in the Queen Maud Land. Hence, the scientific data collected by Indian scientists assumes greater importance.

For instance, the monsoons, which have a direct bearing on the economy of our country, are controlled by numerous parameters generated over the entire global system. Climatological data collected by Indian scientists will help develop a more realistic model for monsoon prediction and understand the dynamics of the weather system over the Indian Ocean. A study of ice cores will similarly give a picture of past climatic records and provide vital inputs to this prediction model. Again, Antarctica provides a singular platform to monitor the depletion of ozone. An understanding of the ozone hole phenomenon, though part of a global effort, is of significant interest to Indian scientists. The ozone hole, once considered static, has proved to be dynamic. This discovery has a direct bearing on the weather patterns over the Indian Ocean.

About 700-2500 million years ago, India and the other southern continents were a single land mass called Gondwanaland with Antarctica as its centre-piece. During this period, intense magmatic activity took place resulting in Antarctica possessing the richest mineral deposits to be found anywhere in the world. Indian geologists are endeavouring to reconstruct the most beneficial placement of Antarctica with the peninsular margins of India. This will not only lead to a better understanding of the earth's tectonic history but will also help elucidate the spatial distribution of geo-resources in India and Antarctica.

The southern oceans are the richest source of krills, fish and squids in the Antarctic water which offer significant economic resources. The krill resources in the Indian Ocean sector of the Antarctic waters can be a future source of protein food with an excellent export potential. Similarly, Antarctic bacteria have drawn the attention of Indian microbiologists for their potential in biotechnology development. Attempts are being made to identify low temperature genes useful in the disposal of human and organic waste through bio-degradation under extremely low temperature conditions. This will be of practical use in the cold Himalayan regions.

Human adaptation techniques adopted in the harshness of Antarctica and the ways and means to enhance their physical productivity under conditions of stress will provide vital insights in improving the mental and physical health of Indians living in similar conditions. Moreover, the relationship between geomagnetic storms and the functional reserves of the human body can be better understood after the Antarctic experience.

An understanding of the plasma processes in the earth's upper atmosphere is of practical importance in long distance radio communication and satellite operations. The high latitudes, particularly of Antarctica, provide a region uniquely suitable to study the best possible windows in communication especially for HF and VLF propagations.

Antarctica is also an incomparable natural laboratory for developing expertise in low temperature structural engineering. Technologies developed in the life-support systems and station infrastructure of Dakshin Gangotri and Maitri have been successfully used in designing and setting up advanced bases in the Himalayas The Indian Navy and Air Force, by participating in these expeditions, have gained an enviable professional expertise in snow-ice navigation under adverse climatic conditions.

India ratified the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctica Treaty in 1996, reaffirming a global commitment to the protection of the pristine Antarctic environment Realising the unique oppotunities provided to scientific research by Antarctica, India has so far launched 15 successful expeditions to this icy continent Future expeditions will be rooted in research where by the country can comply with the environmental protocol to the Antarctic Treaty. This will include a portfolio of contemporary scientific programmes in atmospheric sciences, earth sciences and glaciology, biological and environmental sciences, human physiology, oceanography and engineering and communication. Such expeditions will directly relate to the key topics identified by the international Antarctic community to address the role of Antarctica as a global modulator It will also enable the creation of a knowledge base for future sustainable development of the southern waters and mainland Antarctica. Finally, it will develop enabling technologies applicable to the country's colder regions.

India's maritime security is strategically linked to Antarctica through the continuance of scientific programmes. Our main focus should be to ensure that it is not disrupted by any nation in the IOR. India's expertise in a wide range of activities makes it imperative that conflict situations are diffused within given institutional arrangements The exploitation of underwater resources, control of sea-lanes and island territories, as well as the potential for any future conflict, should not be allowed to extend to Antarctica. One good reason for nations wishing to sustain present regimes in Antarctica is the clear possibility that countries which desire to assert competing claims might resort to force, although the distance of the continent makes this a remote possibility.

The long term strategic situation of Antarctica is best summed up by Harry Almond who says: 'demilitarised arenas are arenas is which states have no reason to compete... Once states perceive the need to engage in the arena for their own self-defence, or for establishing a critical base for power, the demilitarised status cannot last.' But this is only a remote possibility in the case of Antarctica.

The forgotten force

RAHUL BEDI

THE unseemly controversy over the appointment of India's naval chief and the turbulence it created could not have come at a worse time for the force. It hit the navy at a time when a major portion of its ageing fleet of principal combatants is due for decommissioning by 2000, but a severe resource crunch threatens to ensure that many will not be replaced.

The dispute was over which of the Indian Navy's (IN) four senior officers – Admirals Vishnu Bhagwat, Kailash Kohli, Premvir Das and Avinash Tandon – would succeed the outgoing chief of naval staff Vijai Singh Shekhawat. Although the seniormost as the chief of Western Command, Admiral Bhagwat's past had been shrouded in controversy after he legally challenged his sudden transfer as Western Fleet commander to a relatively unimportant post in the late '80s. A groundswell of ill-will emerged against the near certainty of Admiral Bhagwat's appointment. Admirals Kohli, Das and Tandon threw their caps into the succession war which was fought more in the newspapers and naval wardrooms than in the ministry of defence. Accusations and allegations of wrongdoings involving all four admirals flew back and forth and finally the issue was resolved when the seniormost person, Admiral Bhagwat, took over as the naval chief in October.

But the damage had already been done to the Indian Navy, long referred to as the 'forgotten force'. Alongside the demoralisation in its senior ranks it faced a decreasing share of India's defence budget, in sharp contrast to its increasing economic and military role in the Indian Ocean, protecting offshore oil interests and island territories. Admiral Vijai Singh Shekhawat, the recently retired naval chief, put India's naval affairs in perspective when he criticised the government for jeopardising the force's operational preparedness through low budgetary allocations, bureaucratic delays and an overall ignorance of matters naval. 'The government takes a long time understanding the navy's needs but most of the time it is too late,' he said shortly before retiring in September.

Admiral Shekhwat also pointed out that the navy had been seeking enhanced funds for over a decade to meet its increased role of protecting offshore oil interests and island territories, but all requests had been tied up in 'bureuacratic procedures and non-decisions'. Threats from the sea cannot be visualised as easily as those on land and require an understanding of geography, warships as well as the history of nations. 'Unfortunately, there is little comprehension of these matters in India,' he observed. The naval chief said an increasing number of ships were being decommissioned after 2000 and though imports to replace them was a 'possibility', the skills the IN had nurtured and generated locally in shipbuilding would dissipate in the face of declining orders.

India does not have a maritime tradition. The entire mindset and strategic planning since the coming of the Mughal kings in the 16th century has been on land-based armies with little or no perception of a naval force. And though there were brief periods in Indian history when the Cholas in the south and the hardy Marathas in the west raised navies, for centuries the onus remained on land-based forces. Even the British who came in the mid-18th century, first as traders and later as conquerors, were not overly anxious to build a strong Indian navy. The Royal Navy maintained their main lines of communication from Whitehall and

strategically they did not want to nurture a navy in India which could threaten their sea dominance Hence, like many invaders before them, the British concentrated almost exclusively on building up the army, using its mite to extend their empire to the borders of Afghanistan in the north and Persia in the west. The navy, meanwhile, was given short shrift and whatever little existed was, ironically, controlled from London

After Partition and the subsequent division of assets, the army once again emerged as the largest force in both India and Pakistan. The air force at that time was a fledgling service and the navy little more than a token force on either side of the newly formed borders. Soon after Independence in August 1947, the importance of land-based forces was reinforced in the war over Kashmir when Pathans from Pakistan's North West Frontier raided the principality ruled by a Hindu maharaja in October 1947 in violation of the 'stand still' agreement which both sides had agreed upon. The Pathans occupied a third of Kashmir, which Pakistan still holds, before Kashmir's maharaja acceeded to India. Indian troops were immediately flown into Kashmir to stop the raiders from proceeding further and the predominance of the army was established yet again. Though the air force was in the process of expanding with help from the British Royal Air Force, the navy – equipped with little more than obsolete destroyers gifted by the Royal Navy – continued to be ignored. The Kashmir war was followed by the border dispute with China in 1962 and a second war with Pakistan in 1965 – both land-dominated conflicts.

Naval expansion began in the 1960s and early '70s but not without inter-service rivalry with the air force, by now a proven force, equipped with Soviet aircraft and having earned itself laurels in the 1965 war. This rivalry had emerged long before the commissioning of the IN's first aircraft carrier- INS Vikrant – acquired five years earlier in 1961 from Britain. When negotiations for the carrier were in progress, the Indian Air Force (IAF) was decidedly opposed to the IN acquiring air capability, fearing encroachment onto its carefully carved out niche. But when the IN prevailed and acquired the carrier, the IAF insisted on maintaining exclusive air control over all coastal areas, a monopoly it continued to hold till 1977, retreating rather reluctantly when it did.

The step-motherly treatment of the IN is particularly apparent in resource allocation. Since the '80s the IN has received an average of 12% of the defence budget compared with 58% for the army and 23% for the IAF In the revised expenditure for 1995-96, for example, the naval budget of Rs 38 14 billion is less than the revenue budget alone of the IAF (Rs 39 11 billion) and Rs 129.32 billion for the army Naval expenditure decreased by a depressing 25% in constant terms in just four years from Rs 9 6 billion in 1989-90 to Rs.7 2 billion in 1992-1993. Although the situation improved in the following year, the naval budget has once again resumed a downward slide with the annual allocation for 1996-97 being Rs 8 85 billion in constant terms

However, officials felt that with inflation hovering around 8-10% and the recent 25% fuel hike, this increase would be neutralised Senior IN officials said that a 15% allocation of India's defence budget for the navy, instead of the present 12%, could arrest its downslide while an 18-20% hike was necessary for a 'significant reversal' of its declining fortunes.

Admiral Shekhawat's pessimism, thus, is not entirely unfounded. IN officials pointed out that about 50% of all scheduled refits had been postponed, less than 30% of ships came out of routine maintenance on time and the effective fighting capability of a majority of surface and sub-surface combatants was 'abysmally low'. Moreover, the number of principal combatants too would decline rapidly over the next five years. According to official projections, the IN's force of 36 principal combatants will shrink to around 27 warships by 2000, a reduction of a quarter. And by 2015, the number of principal combatants will have decreased by nearly two-thirds with the retirement of another 13 warships. Of the two aircraft carriers, INS Vikrant (formerly HMS Hercules) is being decommissioned next year while the second INS Viraat (formerly HMS Hermes), is up for retirement around 2004-6.*

The future is bleak even for the submarine arm as no new orders are on hand Only 12 of 18 submarines including eight Kilo-class and four HDW type 209/1500 boats from Germany will be operational by 2000 – a force reduction of a third

In contrast, the IN has to cope with the burgeoning naval might of Pakistan and China, with whom it has fought wars over territorial disputes which remain unresolved. Both countries are rapidly expanding their navies through acquisitions and increased spending And though the navy's priorities lie in indigenising, Admiral Shekhawat is of the view that its inability to place new orders at local shipyards might lead to making overseas purchases as a 'one-time measure' to compensate for time lost on delayed orders. This is endorsed by Ministry of Defence (MOD) officials who said purchasing naval hardware from countries like Russia, offering equipment cheap, is one way to counter the resource crunch. Officials said that the pace of inducting and launching new vessels into service, too, had been tardy. Since 1980 only seven principal combatants – three Godavari-

* India's naval fleet includes two aircraft carriers, 18 submarines, 13 frigates and five destroyers besides 20 corvettes and 33 offshore patrol and mine warfare and missile craft

Its air arm comprises 23 FRS51 Sea Harriers - plus four T-60 trainers - 75 strike/ASW helicopters, including 32 Sea King. MK42A/Bs and 10 Tu-142Ms, 5IL-38s and 10 Dornier 228s for maritime reconnaissance

Of its two aircraft carriers, the INS Vikrant commissioned into the IN in 1961 will be decommissioned next year, having undergone three major refits and upgradation while INS Viraat, the second carrier will be retired sometime around 2004-5

Of 18 IN submarines, only eight Kilo-class and four HDW type 209/1500 boats, two of which were indigenously built, will be operational by 2000 The remaining six Foxtrot-class boats - two of which are already in non-operational reserve - will have retired by then

class frigates, two Delhi-class destroyers and two HDW type 209/1500 submarines – had been built locally and launched 'The navy is concerned that the skills we have nurtured and generated in shipyards and dockyards may dissipate in the face of declining orders,' lamented Admiral Shekhawat.

Meanwhile, in the pipeline are the first of three Brahmaputra-class frigates, built at Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE) in Calcutta and two Delhi-class destroyers, completed at Mazagaon Docks Limited (MDL), Bombay, and scheduled for commissioning by end 1997 Another major hurdle the navy has to cross is to indigenously develop its missile capability as almost all anti-ship and surface-to-air missiles are of Soviet origin. Although there is muted optimism over the naval version of Trishul, the surface-to-air missile, currently being developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP), naval sources said it will not be available till 1997-98, at the earliest.

Defence scientists are also developing Sagarika, an anti-ship cruise missile under a classified naval weapons programme. Expected to have a range of around 300 km, Sagarika (meaning oceanic) may be ready for deployment by around 2000. Naval sources said the test launch of this hull-mounted, sea-based missile system with a low trajectory, capable of achieving high sub-sonic speeds and cruising at an altitude of 15-100 metres above ground, originally scheduled for 1996-97 has been delayed Meanwhile, the erosion in the navy's principal combatants could not have come at a worse time for the navy. The international Law of the Sea formally came into effect in November 1994 after nearly 12 years, providing much of the rationale for the IN's role in the Indian Ocean and surrounding seas.

India's exclusive economic zone of 2.8 million sq km provides 75% of its domestic oil production from off shore wells and a majority of its overseas trade – which includes transportation of oil from the Middle East – is sea borne Extraction of polymetallic nodules (PMN) from the seabed in future and offshore oil prospecting will further enhance India's sea dependence. Moreover, the navy's role in the '90s has increased well beyond defending India's island territories of Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. Like the army, it has become involved in internal security, executing offshore patrols in the Palk Straits to check the infiltration of armed Tamil separatists from the LTTE. The navy has also established 19 detachments along the western Gujarat and Maharashtra coastline to check smuggling of explosives and armaments following the serial bombings in Bombay three years ago in which over 250 people died The recent seizure of three Burmese fishing boats operating in Indian waters by the Coast Guard is yet another instance of how India has stepped up vigilance in guarding its maritime territory.

In contrast to the IN's declining fortunes, Pakistan is investing heavily in naval expansion. Last year it purchased three Agosta-90 diesel/electric-powered submarines from France which are to be armed with Exocet SM-39 anti-ship missiles. The air independent propulsion (AIP) Agostas' will be commissioned into the Pakistan Navy 1998 onwards, qualitatively improving its offensive capability and significantly outclassing the numerically superior IN. Pakistan's submarine fleet is also the most prestigious part of its navy. A Pakistani submarine sank an Indian frigate during the Indo-Pak war of 1971, the first such kill of a surface ship since World War II

Pakistan also acquired six type-21 frigates from the UK in 1993-94 for about £50 million after its lease on nine U.S. warships expired. These RN frigates have undergone considerable modernisation and upgradation, each one armed with Harpoon anti-ship missiles and a Sea Lynx helicopter capable of ASW operations. Pakistan, on the other hand, has 10 attack helicopters, eight frigates, three destroyers and eight mine sweepers besides six submarines. Pakistan has also upgraded its fixed wing naval aircraft and recently received an injection of sophisticated naval hardware, among other military equipment worth $368 million from the U.S after waiver of the arms embargo under the Pressler Amendment. The arms package includes the P-3C Orion maritime patrol aircraft, giving an edge to the Pakistani navy by opening up India's western seaboard to its extended range and weaponry

Indian defence analysts feel that Pakistan wants to play an enhanced role in South Asia, aimed principally at checking India's growing maritime interests and increasing dependence on the sea for trade and mineral resources like PMN and oil 'Pakistan wants submarines to fulfil the smaller nations policy of sea denial to its larger neighbour,' commented a naval expert from the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi

The major threat to the IN is from Pakistan's navy. Although the latter has not been able to rival the IN's numerical superiority, analysts said it has tried to surpass it in qualitative terms Pakistan deployed submarine-launched anti-ship missiles and operated long range maritime strike and reconnaissance aircraft before the IN. And, according to the UN Register on Conventional Arms, India has not acquired a single warship from any foreign source between 1992-95. Since 1995, the only transfers made to India includes an obsolete Leander class training ship from Britain and a fleet tanker from Russia In comparison, Pakistan was the world's fifth largest recipient of warships and the second in the Indian ocean region between 1992 and 1995.

The IN is also concerned over increased Chinese naval activity in the Indian Ocean region. Although Sino-Indian relations have improved considerably over the past decade after the 1962 war, naval officials are wary of China after it installed signal intelligence facilities in the Coco island, 30 nautical miles from India's Andaman island chain in the Bay of Bengal. They fear that Beijing's help to Myanmar in modernising two ports and

structing a naval base on Hianggyi nd at the mouth of the Bassein river l the development of existing naval ilities at Akyab and Mergui, may lead an arrangement whereby China could intain a naval presence in the Indian cean for the first time These fears ined credence two years ago after a hinese trawler, equipped with sophisticated tracking and surveying equipment, vas detained by India's Coast Guard llegedly for spying, but released under iplomatic pressure from Beijing.

'Chinese presence on the Coco and expansion of naval bases in Myanmar equipped with radar, refuelling and repair facilities could pose a serious threat to India,' said a naval analyst This assumes significance as China is emerging as a blue water navy with plans for carrier capability to what, till now, has been considered a defensive force. New radar equipment has been installed on Coco island, enabling the Chinese to monitor Indian naval communications in the region, he added This includes the possibility of China monitoring India's ballistic missile tests off the eastern coast of Orissa Significantly, China has provided Myanmar arms worth over Rs. 50 billion.

Meanwhile, Indian has been building a nuclear-powered submarine ever since returning a Charlie II type nuclear-powered submarine, leased from the Soviet Union around 1990. According to former Atomic Energy Commission officials, work on the reactor of the classified Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV), was proceeding faster than on the boat itself. The ATV's design configuration includes cruise missile firing capability Though the boat is being designed by the navy and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the vessel's nuclear power unit is the joint responsibility of the Bhaba Atomic Research Centre at Bombay and naval scientists.

Officials said that despite a dwindling budget and related problems, the IN has maintained its profile by holding joint manoeuvres with navies from Australia, U.K., France, Indonesia, Russia, Singapore and Malaysia, Russia, Oman, New Zealand and the U.S. since 1991. And it is a role they expect maintain. The navies of India and the U.S. concluded their third round of naval exercise off the western Malabar coast in the Arabian Sea earlier this year and are due to hold a fourth round next year. Code named Malabar III, the manoeuvres were aimed at closer defence cooperation between the two countries by 2000

Bilateral naval exchanges between India and the U S. have grown over the past three years under the Kickleighter Proposals for greater strategic cooperation between the two militaries through high level exchanges, periodic policy reviews and reciprocal visits by senior commanders. The 5-year old proposals named after General Claude Kickleighter, former commander of the U.S Pacific forces, aim to steadily strengthen Indo-U.S military ties by the end of the decade. Steering committees for the army, navy and air force headed by senior U.S. and Indian officers meet from time to time to discuss policy issues and strategic concerns The maximum interaction, however, has been between the two armies over the past four years

In the last round of naval manoeuvres which lasted three days, however, India was represented by one 'Kilo' class Soviet submarine, two surface combatants and one Tu-142 maritime reconnaissance aircraft. The USN, on the other hand, fielded one Sturgeon class submarine, two surface combatants and one P-3C Orion reconnaissance aircraft

In the summer of 1995, Indian para-commandos and U.S. Special Forces held a high altitude warfare exercise in the hills around Nahan, 150 miles north of New Delhi. A few months earlier, Marine commandos from the two countries conducted joint manoeuvres for 20 days along India's west coast, sharing tactics and strategy in the area of marine terrorism. Analysts said India was using its large naval fleet to expand its influence overseas in keeping with its long term aim of increasing its standing among the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). The Indian Navy recently concluded the fourth round of manoeuvres with Singapore's navy and has already been accepted as an ASEAN 'dialogue partner'

It is also expecting to undertake the repair and maintenance of Indonesia's naval fleet, recently acquired from erstwhile East Germany which comprises mostly Soviet vessels with which the navy is familiar. Earlier, the Indian Navy carried out its first joint exercise with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) navy in the Persian Gulf, signalling closer links between the Arab sheikdoms and India. And, over the past year Indian Navy ships have visited nearly 20 countries including China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan.

The IN is also keen to increase goodwill visits to foreign ports in a bid to market Indian ships and revive its dockyards, falling into disrepair due to declining orders. Officials say there is potential for India to sell medium-sized ships like Khukri-class corvettes to developing countries looking for cheaper vessels 'Warship building is one of the areas where India can compete internationally without compromising on technology,' said Admiral V.S. Shekhawat. IN officials said the Philippines have shown interest in the Khukri class corvettes and a Filipino delegation is also expected in Indian for further talks

The IN is under pressure It has to contend with an overall lack of strategic thinking and operate within a system where the military and government are invariably at variance, unable to execute or initiate any perspective planning.

The navy also has to deal with an uninformed bureaucracy at the defence ministry, inexperienced in military matters but the final arbiter of all resource and equipment allocations Its modernisation is in jeopardy. Underpinning this is an ambitious indigenisation programme, which IN officers concede is bureaucratic, unproductive and archaic. It will be up to the new naval chief, Admiral Bhagwat, to try and cut through these levels and salvage the mess the navy finds itself in.

Naval threat to Pakistan

PERVAIZ IQBAL CHEEMA

NAVIES, in the past, were expected to perform three major functions – protect trade and commerce along with shipping routes; provide territorial (coastal) defence; acquire trading rights, bases and even colonies.[1] While it is true that the era of territorial colonialism is over and navies are no longer meant to secure colonies, the modern concept of sea power has enlarged its scope and includes not only traditional objectives but also to secure a share of sea resources. With a growing realization that land resources will soon be exhausted, endeavours to divide the wealth of the oceans are intensifing.[2] Consequently, many nations have strengthened their navies not only with a view to exploit all the dimensions of the sea, but also to secure other economic, political and strategic objecti Nations aspiring for global or regic roles have opted for both qualitative quantitative expansion.

Countries entrusted with or hav assumed global or regional roles ten acquire two additional tasks – of maint ing a naval balance in strategically imj tant areas of a particular ocean, protecting the sea lines of communica in the event of war If, for some rea a global power were to shed the oner task of maintaining its naval presenc power vacuum would result and be fi by other interested global or regic powers. One such power vacuum resu from the British decision to withd from east of Suez in 1968 which, in t influenced the superpowers to r towards the Indian Ocean.[3]

The presence of large fleets of US and the USSR and India's inabilit demonstrate its superiority in the 1 India-Pakistan armed conflict deter

1 This view was primarily expressed by Admiral Mahan Quoted in Hedley Bull, 'The New Environment Sea Power and Political Influence', in *Sea Power and Influence Old Issues and New Challenges* edited by Jonathan Alford The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1980, pp 3-11

2 Admiral Kazutomi Uchida, 'Naval Competition and Security in East Asia', in Alford, *Ibid*, pp 104-9

3 It needs to be pointed out that some Indian ers either did not fully comprehend the implica of the vacuum created by the British withdraw chose not to accept the vacuum theory Instead

India from demonstrating its quest for regional supremacy. The Indian victory in the 1971 India-Pakistan war and the consequent dismemberment of Pakistan, coupled with a successful nuclear explosion in 1974, generated sufficient confidence among the Indians to accelerate the ongoing process of military expansion geared for a major power status in the Indian Ocean.

Although efforts to strengthen its military forces, along with a world-wide search for modern arms, started soon after the Sino-Indian clash of 1962, priority was given to the army and air force. Naval expansion was delayed by a few years primarily due to the non-availability of naval vessels.[4] With the emergence of the Soviet Union as a major supplier of naval equipment, the Indian Navy undertook an accelerated process of modernization and expansion.[5] The quest for great power status led her to develop a blue water navy, currently not only regarded as one of the few large naval forces in the world, but one consistently undergoing expansion and modernization.

To play a great power role in the Indian Ocean, India needs not only an acknowledged position of dominance in the South Asian strategic environment but also an ability to play the role of local policeman. To acquire the desired capacity, India started beefing up its armed forces during the '60s. Indian confidence, badly damaged in its war with China in 1962, was somewhat restored after the 1965 Indo-Pak war. But it was only after the 1971 victory that India felt confident enough to go ahead with the military build-up that would eventually rank it among the major powers. Over the last few decades India has not only acquired the requisite strength but has also demonstrated her capability to intervene in what was once East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Sri Lanka and in the Maldives crises.

The development of India's armed forces followed the Soviet pattern. Like the Soviet navy, the Indian Navy was also the last of the three armed services to receive adequate government patronage. The meagre budgetary allocations gradually rose to respectable levels, maintaining an upward trend. The development of Port Blair (Andamans) as an advance naval base was approved in 1972-73 in order to serve as a focal point for the defence of the eastern coast, protection of trade with the east and the resources of the economic zone.[6] The 1980s and the 1990s witnessed rapid naval expansion and modernization of the Indian Navy. By the '90s not only had India become a strong naval power, it had also acquired nuclear capabilities along with a nuclear-powered submarine. Lacking the qualitative and quantitative strength to match Indian naval capabilities, most littoral states viewed this naval expansion with concern. Perhaps that is why many of them consider superpower naval presence in the region as a mixed blessing.[7] A former Prime Minister of Singapore categorically stated that an overwhelming presence of one navy needs to be balanced by the presence of other similar grade navies.[8]

The Indian Navy adopted a dynamic maritime strategy based on the ring fence system with three clearly demarcated zones of operation. The inner zone consists of territories that formed the British Indian empire (including Pakistan and Burma). This meant that India would seek acknowledgment of its power position from its immediate neighbours and would expect them to pay due consideration to India's national interests. The second and a much larger zone would not only control this area but would also attempt to secure the withdrawal of existing fleets and deny the Indian Ocean to outside naval powers in any meaningful sense. The third zone of operation is the entire globe implying that the Indian Navy, like the navies of the great powers, would be able to cruise around the globe.

The overall strategy implies that India aims to secure complete control of the Indian Ocean, deny the ocean to outsiders with a deterrent naval capability, exploit the resources of the sea, provide a protective umbrella to its trade and trading routes and dominate the markets of the region. To deter outsiders, India needs a capability that would earn the respect of those equipped with equal, if not greater, naval capabilities. With its existing strength, observers feel that India, if it ever came to a confrontation with a great power navy, may be unable to control the entire Indian Ocean, but would certainly be able to exercise control over a sizeable part of the ocean.[9] The current level of its naval capability has equipped India with a blue water offensive and defensive capability against perceived adversaries in the extended strategic environment, a strong coastal defence ability to both defend India's long coastline and effectively protect its island territories, as well as a defensive strength to offer protection to Indian shipping in the coastal waters and on the high seas.[10]

Compared to the Indian naval build-up during the decades of the '70s to

asserted that this theory was a justification for deeper U S involvement in the region. See G S Bhargava, *South Asian Security After Afghanistan*. Lexington Books, Toronto, 1983, pp 149-68.

4. Ravindra Tomar, 'Development of the Indian Navy: An Overstated Case', Working Paper No 26, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1980, pp 1-2.

5 *Ibid*.

6 Rear Admiral K Sridharan, *A Maritime History of India*. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, New Delhi, 1982, pp 346-47. Also see Michael A Morris, *Expansion of Third World Navies*. The Macmillan Press, London, 1987, pp 229-41. 'The Politics of Indian Naval Rearmament' by Raju G C. Thomas in *Pacific Community*, vol 6, April 1975, pp 452-74. Tomar, op cit., pp 17-18.

7 Their perspectives varied with security priorities. India was hostile to the United States, while Iran was uneasy about the Soviet Union. Singapore argued the merits of a superpower presence, Sri Lanka urged a denuclearized zone of peace, China tacitly welcomed an American presence while condemning both superpowers and looking to her East African diplomacy, Somalia accepted a Soviet, and Bahrain an American presence. None of the littoral states sought withdrawal of one superpower, but many of the smaller states were reluctant to encourage a rapid or total withdrawal by both. See 'Naval Competition and Security in South West Asia' by Shahram Chubin in Jonathan Alford, op cit. pp 95-103.

8 Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, 'Security Conference on the Indian Ocean', *The News*, 17 September 1992.

9 *Time*, 24 August 1988.

10 Raju G C. Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*.

the '90s, Pakistan's naval growth presents a dismal picture. Cosmetic improvements were registered over the years but these neither reflect a true realization of threat from the sea nor serious naval planning for the future Not only is the Pakistani navy considerably smaller than India's, it consists of few modern and sophisticated naval vessels.

To understand the role of Pakistan's navy in national security policy it is necessary to identify the supposed objectives, given its existing capabilities, and an expanding Indian Navy. Among the objectives assigned to Pakistan's navy, the defence of its coasts, ports, shipping routes and fishing areas are regarded as relatively more important than surveillance of the sea to keep track of potentially hostile maritime forces. If it is the Indians, can the Pakistan Navy deny them access? Given the existing size of India's navy, this is unlikely Apart from strengthening its air, subsurface and surface capabilities, the Indian Navy has also made steady progress in areas such as infrastructure development, including an extension of base facilities, modernizing communication, development of an indigenous ship-building industry, enlarging research and development facilities and expanding its coast guard strength. Additionally, India's well-developed space programme and comprehensive nuclear capabilities, in conjunction with recent naval build-ups, have made her navy an impressive force. Indeed, Pakistan's perception of a continuing Indian naval threat is not illogical.

Compared to the rapid build-up of the Indian Navy, Pakistan's development of its navy is unimpressive Pakistan has shown little understanding of the use of sea power to protect its interests or to deter threats from the sea. Land-oriented threat perceptions continue to dominate its strategic thinking Consequently, the navy never received the share of resources it deserved. While Pakistan's army is half a million strong, its navy, including the naval air wing, has just about 20,000 personnel. It has no aircraft carrier, and its few frigates and destroyers are no match against a massive Indian fleet. While an aircraft carrier increases India's maritime reach, its destroyers strengthen its sea surface warfare capacity. Perhaps the only area in which the Pakistan Navy is relatively better equipped and can make an effective contribution is in underwater warfare with its few submarines. Patrol and coastal combatant capabilities consist of a few patrol boats, hardly sufficient to defend its 440 nautical mile long coastline – a coast which lacks in communication infrastructure.

The ostentatious and massive presence of the Indian Navy and its rapid build-up has become both a challenge and threat to the Pakistan Navy One need not invoke Mahan's theories to realize the existing imbalance both in naval vessels and merchant fleets. Over 90% of Pakistan's trade depends upon sea routes, making it imperative to strengthen the guardian of sea lanes – the navy. The navy should develop a seaborne tactical defence capability to both counter any amphibious threat to its coast and meet any blue water threats to shipping routes on the high seas In addition, Pakistan's navy needs to be modernized and expanded not just to perform traditional functions but also to cater for future exigencies. It is well known that land resources are rapidly depleting and in future we may have to turn to the sea in order to secure our legitimate share and to protect our economic zone.

Thus Pakistan's apprehensions regarding continuing Indian naval expansion in pursuit of its regional strategy appear to be real. The implications for Pakistan should be examined in the context of geo-strategic global and regional environments, the Indian concept of security and its accompanying naval doctrine, and Indian aspirations for great power status.

For almost four decades, the cold war dominated world politics and kept the superpowers actively involved, confronting newly independent nations with the dilemma of taking sides. Many state that felt threatened opted to align themselves with one superpower or the other The rest opted out of the cold war to maintain a posture of non-alignment. Like other great power conflicts of the past the cold war generated an intense competition for influence and control between the United States and the Soviet Union After it was over, the need to maintain huge military paraphernalia in the regional centres could not be justified and consequently a process of disengagement of forces ensued.

With a changing global strategic environment and reduced superpower activity, two developments seem somewhat inevitable. First, regional states lacking cohesive security perceptions are likely to increase defence allocations in order to strengthen their armed forces Threat perceptions often become more pronounced in the absence of outside equalizers. Besides, the psychological impact resulting from a loss of counter balancing power also tends to promote upward pressures for increased military spending. A comparative analysis of defence allocations in the South Asian region, where both superpowers now have a reduced presence, clearly indicates an upward trend in military expenditure Second, the withdrawal or reduced role of superpowers would encourage aspiring regional or extra-regional powers to fill the vacuum, or dramatically increase their activities in the region. If there is more than one aspirant, a new regional rivalry is likely to ensue

All security doctrines are dynamic and tend to change in accordance with the dictates of a changing environment The Indian concept of security has also experienced periodic transformations Nevertheless, it appears that India's security perceptions have largely been influenced by Kautilya, who said that neighbouring states should be treated as enemies or potential enemies while the states beyond the neighbouring countries should be seen as friends.[11] The applica

Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1986, pp 154-55.

11 Kautilya developed this theory in his work, th

tion of Kautilya's concepts is evident in a review of Indian security perceptions and policies over the last four decades. China and Pakistan, in many ways, continue to be viewed as India's major enemies, whereas Afghanistan and the Soviet Union (neighbours with Pakistan and China), have enjoyed extremely cordial relations with India. Admittedly, there have been patches of peace and even reasonable strides in normalization of relationships between India-China and India-Pakistan, but overall antagonistic and hostile relations have dominated most of the period since India's independence Even policies vis-a-vis adjacent regions reflect an extension of Kautilyan principles.

India's defence posture changed after the 1962 Sino-Indian war and a comprehensive defence review was undertaken to modernize and strengthen its armed forces. Since then, Indian defence capabilities have steadily multiplied along with efforts towards self-reliance in equipment The '70s, '80s, and the '90s saw a substantive transformation from a sufficient defence posture into one revolving around the concept of deterrence, along with dramatic changes in India's strategic environment.

From the limited strategic environment of the '50s and '60s, where threats from China and Pakistan alone were identified, Indian perceptions of the new environment have led them to conclude that a much larger area, extending beyond the subcontinent to the Middle East and Southeast Asia, forms an integral part of the Indian security parameter. A strong air force and massive army could tackle a crisis in South Asia, but handling the new security region required the building of an impressive navy, a task rapidly accomplished during the '80s, and the '90s

Perhaps the most significant implication emanates not from projected Indian naval capabilities but from India's future intentions. Ascertaining a country's physical capability and its indigenous defence production is comparatively easy today, but to correctly assess a nation's *intention* is a difficult and complex process. One can count the guns, tanks, aircraft and naval vessels but how does one measure thinking processes oriented to the future? Although it is difficult to gauge India's intentions, an analysis of the historical dimension, justifications for its naval expansion, and its vision of a future status as periodically expressed by concerned and involved individuals, provide some clues

Compared to Pakistan, whose historical perspective is constrained by the partition of 1947, the Indian perspective is wider. Clearly, the outer limits of an independent India had been visualised well before the partition of the Indian subcontinent Writing in 1943, an eminent Indian described Southeast Asia as 'Further India', implying that India and Southeast Asia were connected integrally in their political, social and economic life and have reacted on each other in their historical growth.[12] Not only do historical records indicate the existence of Indian kingdoms in Champa, Cambodia and Annam, but Indian sea power closely united the mainland with these Hindu kingdoms in the east.[13] Currently, the term 'Greater India' is used to describe her cultural, ethnic and social links with societies beyond South Asia. It is an expression of recent origin and was practically unknown, or seldom used as embodying a definite historical conception, a half a century ago.[14] The term implies the enduring influence of Indian culture and Hindu religion that tends to highlight distinctive commonalities of Indian and other societies beyond South Asia While the influence of an ancient Indian civilization survived in some parts of eastern Asia, it rapidly declined in western Asia with the advent and consequent impact of Islam and Christianity [15]

Compared to their politicians, Indian naval commanders and defence analysts are more open about Indian justification for rapid naval expansion In a highly publicized interview, Admiral J G Nadkarni stressed that 'we have to ensure that we grow all around Sea control, sea denial and protection of exclusive economic zone. Our plan for the future takes care of all these areas'.[16] An Indian defence analyst, while underplaying the importance of the debate on a blue water navy justified India's acquisition of this capability by stressing that modern missile equipped submarines could be dealt with only by such a fleet. Implicit in this assertion is the fact that since all great powers have modern missile equipped submarines, it is imperative that India possess both capability and counter capability.

Finally a word about India's self-perceptions. India sees itself as a great power destined to play a crucial role in international politics. Given its size, population, strategic location and history, it cannot but aspire to a great power role in international politics As early as 1939, Nehru wrote that 'India will always make a difference to the world, fate has marked us for big things'.[17] Even the partition of the subcontinent could not alter Nehru's vision that India would be the fourth biggest power after the US, USSR and China.[18] Nehru's perceptions may have seemed somewhat premature and up to 1971 India clearly did not try to translate them into policy objectives. Only after the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 and demonstrated nuclear capability in 1974, did it start to behave like a major power

India's economic growth and military modernization programmes coincided with the superpower policy of

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Arthashastra Quoted in Raju G C Thomas, 'Indian Security Policy', *ibid*, pp 14-19

12 K M Panikkar, *The Future of India and Southeast Asia* George Allen and Unwin, London, 1943, p 1

13 *Ibid*

14 R C Majumdar, *India and Southeast Asia* B A Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1979, p 1

15 *Ibid*, pp 14-15

16 *Asian Defence Journal*, May 1988, p 112

17 Baldev Raj Nayar, 'A World Role the Dialectics of Purpose and Power', in *India A Rising Middle Power* edited by John W Mellor Westview Press, Colorado, 1979, pp 117-46

18 *Ibid*

gradual regional disengagement in the post cold war era.[19] This enabled India to assert its role in keeping with its aspirations and vision. Indian troops (in the capacity of a Peace Keeping Force) on Sri Lanka's soil from 1987-1990, and India's successful effort to foil a coup attempt in the Maldives in November 1988, are manifestations of desires and roles India has assigned herself. In a letter of 27 July 1987 addressed to the President of Sri Lanka, former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi categorically stressed that Trincomalee or any other port in Sri Lanka could not be made available for military use to any country in a manner prejudicial to India's interests.[20] Undoubtedly, Delhi seemed to have realized that not only do force projection and effective diplomacy go together but coercive diplomacy pays richer dividends.

The increasing popularity and strength of communal parties like the BJP, coupled with technological strides in areas like missile and nuclear development programmes, make it difficult to brush aside the fears entertained by its neighbours. Indeed, it is only logical to assume that the Pakistan Navy would regard the Indian naval threat as real. Unless the real causes of Indo-Pak antagonism are removed, the steadily increasing disparity between their naval capabilities will continue to generate apprehension.

A strong navy is a pre-requisite to Pakistan's overall security. To strengthen its navy requires both resources and a realistic assessment of needs – not mere wishful thinking so frequently reflected in ceremonial speeches. A careful survey of available resources, coupled with a dispassionate evaluation of the Indian naval threat shows that as Pakistan can never hope to match the Indians in quantitative terms, its best option lies in going for fewer – but qualitatively better – weapon systems.

19. 'Indian Defence. A Conscious Attempt at Pragmatism', *Defence and Foreign Affairs* 18(4), April 1990, pp 14-17, 42-44

20 See the Exchange of Letters in *Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987* edited by Shelton U Kodikara Sridevi Printers, Dehiwala (Sri Lanka), 1989, pp 213-14

Caught between two cold wars

JOHN GOONERATNE

THE past two decades have underscored the importance of maritime security for Sri Lanka. Since the '80s, Sri Lanka has faced Tamil militant activity in the northern areas, the military arm of which was provided by groups trained on Indian soil, and armed by the Indian government. Sri Lanka was quite powerless to stem this open transport of armed militants from South India into its borders. But after a change of policy from the late '80s, India is presently supporting the Sri Lankan government in its attempts to defeat the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) militarily, and resolve the ethnic conflict through political means. India is assisting in interdicting military

[r] The views are those of the writer, and do not necessarily express those of the RCSS.

supplies being brought in by sea to the LTTE, and strives to prevent the LTTE from using Tamil Nadu as a safe rear base, which they had been permitted to do in the late '70s and '80s. At a more mundane level, external trading by Sri Lanka involved the sea, and even now the bulk of its external commerce is dependent on it.

Maritime security comprises both military and non-military aspects. In recent years, as a result of international conventions like the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, countries acquired large maritime assets in the form of exclusive economic zones. In many cases, countries are not in a position to fully utilize or even protect these assets. Since maritime security forms part of the totality of a state's security concerns, it must be viewed in the broader context of a country's overall security concerns and needs. For a variety of reasons the countries of South Asia have had to provide for their own security, maritime or otherwise, with little or no sense of a common regional effort. All moves to achieve regional or sub-regional security arrangements have been stymied. Even the feeble efforts at regional economic cooperation have been blighted.

An explanation for this state of affairs can be traced to the two cold wars that affected the region – the Indo-Pakistan and the U.S.-Soviet. Initially, the Indo-Pakistan one nested within the larger U.S.-Soviet cold war. But with the cessation of U.S.-Soviet hostilities the Indo-Pakistan cold war stands out on its own, and affects a variety of developments in the South Asian region.

The Indo-Pakistan cold war is the older, beginning with the creation of the two states in August 1947. India and Pakistan went to war over rival claims to Kashmir in October 1947. This issue still remains unsettled, bedeviling relations between the two countries. They have fought three wars since their creation, two of them over Kashmir. Their antagonisms have over the years deepened, got entrenched, and developed their own routines. The conflict has now escalated from a conventionally armed to a potentially nuclear conflict.

Given this background, the political landscape of South Asia can generally be described as being dominated by a 'hostility consensus' between India and Pakistan. Between Partition and the mid-1950s a consensus developed and began to harden in both countries around the idea of mutual hostility. Flowing from this are a wide range of ideas on what should be South Asia's proper strategic structure. This has developed to a point where India and Pakistan view each other as a major threat. It is a structural fissure that infects South Asia's overall strategic structure.

At the heart of the South Asian 'security complex' is Indo-Pak rivalry. The mutual fears of these two large states are so deeply intertwined that their national securities, both political and military, cannot be separated. The way each country views the other has been described as a 'tragic case of structural political threat'. Consequently, there is no agreement on a structure in which the smaller South Asian states can coexist with a more powerful and developed India. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have had to accommodate the pulls emanating from this tug-of-war in their foreign policies.

Adding to the political complexities of the region, South Asia has been described as 'a nearly ideal type of a sharply asymmetrical system with one power (India) claiming hegemony'. This power configuration and the aspirations for leadership have given a sharper edge to the Indo-Pakistan cold war, increasing the uneasiness among the smaller states of the region. Amplifying these power asymmetries is the unique geographical configuration, where India is the only country with common maritime and land links with the other regional states – land frontiers with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan, and maritime boundaries with Sri Lanka and Maldives, making India the central state of South Asia.

Among the strategies that India has adopted to maximize advantages, both of its size and the fact that the neighbours all border India but not each other, is the policy of 'bilateralism' in relations with her South Asian neighbours. While this policy of 'bilateralism' has not quite worked in the case of Pakistan, India has been more successful in imposing this strategy on Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh and Bhutan. It helps India avoid internationalization of contentious issues. Thus, the present political and strategic structure of South Asia is a major conditioning factor of the security problems and the politics of the region.

The regional Indo-Pakistan cold war got nested in the global US-Soviet cold war that later came to dominate international politics beginning in the '50s. At that stage South Asia was somewhat out of the immediate line of fire of East-West hostilities. There was also little by way of resources which were crucial to its economy that America obtained from the region. Neither American investment nor the volume of trade with the region was substantial enough to make any particular country in the area an important partner. The region was always an area of peripheral and derivative interest to the United States. Superpower presence in the region had no roots of its own and was determined by global U.S.-Soviet politics elsewhere. The area's importance fluctuated with the shifts in the global policies of the two superpowers.

Given the divisions among the countries in South Asia, especially between India and Pakistan, the area became vulnerable to outside intervention. Pakistan and India, seeking support from one superpower or the other, brought competition into the region And China, their neighbour to the East also got enmeshed in the wake of the superpower intervention in the region.

Even in the post-cold war period, the strategic importance of South Asia in global terms continues to remain marginal. But other developments are taking place, whose long term significance is as

yet difficult to measure. The United States and India – in a mutual about-turn – have begun developing areas of military cooperation, including joint military exercises. What this means for the region is difficult to predict. Another development drawing increasing attention of the U.S. and the West, is the growing nuclear capabilities of India and Pakistan, and the need for nuclear non-proliferation. The region is also undergoing a greater measure of liberalization in trade and investments This is attracting western interest and investment to India, especially from the United States All these factors are likely to impact on the future strategic importance of the region.

The effect of the dual cold wars on the smaller countries of South Asia can be seen in the case of Sri Lanka. The actual and possible security threats that faced Sri Lanka since independence have varied over time. The threat from communism loomed large before the immediate post-independence governments, especially when coupled with the potential for internal security problems arising from left-organized trade union activity in the commercial and the preponderantly Indian Tamil estate sectors. The defence agreements reached with the British at independence were the main security safeguard. These did not lead to any protest from India although the general perception of the source of security threats that Sri Lanka needed defending against was clear

In 1956, with the abrogation of these defence agreements by the United Front government, diplomacy and foreign policy became the main safeguard for the country's security. The good relations that existed between Sri Lanka and India, which at that time was seen as having a self-confident leadership, were considered to be in harmony with the non-aligned notions espoused by both countries In fact, Sri Lanka's non-aligned bilateral relations with the regional states paid dividends in times of crisis. When in 1971, during a revolutionary left uprising against the state, Sri Lanka was reduced to a 'helpless' state as regards its external security, both India and Pakistan, among other countries, responded to a call for assistance. And being an island, the critical area was the country's maritime security.

However, circumstances change, as do regional and international contexts. Ambitions of countries grow, and their security perceptions along with it. Illustrative of some of these dynamics are the interactions between India and Sri Lanka over the past two decades. Sri Lanka entered a particularly turbulent period in the early '70s Issues of national unity and integration came to dominate the political discourse in the country. The Tamil agitation for equal treatment and against decades of discriminatory treatment at the hands of successive governments, which had hitherto taken a strictly parliamentary route, began by the mid-1970s to turn to militancy and then to armed conflict. It is a struggle that still continues.

Several significant developments were witnessed in 1977. In Sri Lanka, a new government dedicated to opening up the economy by dismantling the socialist controls of a command economy and, to this end, improving economic contacts with countries of similar economic persuasions, was in place

On the other side of the Palk Straits, India was into an 'imperious' phase, acting as 'the gendarme of South Asia'. Several of Sri Lanka's actions were interpreted as harmful to Indian interests. Among Sri Lanka's 'sins' were its overtures to join ASEAN, liberalization of the economy and inviting foreign investment, an expansion of the existing Voice of America (VOA) facilities, the efforts to lease out the unused petroleum storage tanks in Trincomalee, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. The last, in particular, was interpreted as part of a U S. strategy, as another link in the chain to 'encircle' India along with the support of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The escalation of military action against Tamil militant groups and the civilian population, and the resulting human rights abuses, led to a huge refugee exodus from Sri Lanka to Tamil Nadu This proved grist to the political mills of Tamil Nadu as well as New Delhi. The rest of the story is too well known to need reiteration in detail. The Indian government recruited, armed and trained several Tamil militant groups and sent them back to Sri Lanka, ostensibly to fight for the Tamil cause.

The states of the South Asian region were soon familiarized, if they hadn't the good sense to know by then, with the contents of the Indira doctrine, India's Monroe Doctrine: India could not be left out whether in fomenting or resolving conflicts in South Asia. Sri Lanka, fed for too long on non-aligned *mantras*, was given a lesson in 'real' concepts of security interests and the role of power in foreign relations. Sri Lanka, at least, learnt its lessons fast as the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord of July 1987 showed. No accord is perfect, especially one seen by many as designed to make the arsonist a firefighter. Some disappointed Tamil militant groups, on the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, pronounced that they had apparently been fighting an Indian cause. India demonstrated clearly that cooperation was 'a question of price and not principle'.

Coming to more recent times, India has been accepted as a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum, seeks membership in APEC, is dismantling the existing licence-raj and changing to a more open and liberalized economy. She has established full diplomatic relations with Israel, developed defence cooperation with the United States and regularly conducts naval exercises with the U.S Navy, and ardently woos the dollar. The moral of the tale is that in South Asia, what is sauce for the goose (India) is not sauce for the gander (read 'smaller states, like Sri Lanka') Where the smaller South Asian states are concerned, the lesson that is sought to be taught is the political wisdom of the expression, 'What's good for General Motors is good for America'.

While security achieved through 'bilateralism' has its advantages, it is not without shortcomings. In Sri Lanka's case, its security is contingent on India's

policies and changing political moods. These have been quite fickle as events of recent years have shown. To take just one instance, during the recent assembly and parliamentary elections in Tamil Nadu, one witnessed the unusual spectacle of all political parties pointing an accusing finger at the other – 'Not we... they supported the LTTE' Only a few years ago they were tripping over each other in competing to shower money and arms on the Tigers. India's present mood of LTTE-bashing following the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi has facilitated cooperation between India and Sri Lanka. What will happen when this political mood changes is anyone's guess.

It was to safeguard their security interests and place them on a basis firmer than the shifting sands of passing political moods, that the smaller countries of South Asia sought regional or sub-regional arrangements. The Indian Ocean Peace Zone (IOPZ) proposal initiated by Sri Lanka, along with some non-aligned states in the UN, and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) initiated by Bangladesh are two such efforts. Both initiatives – IOPZ and SAARC – have felt in different degrees the chilly winds from the two cold wars.

The Indian Ocean Peace Zone proposal, initiated in 1971 in the UN by Sri Lanka along with other non-aligned countries, has become a veritable Karen Quinlan. It has been kept alive primarily by UN life-support systems. While the prime initiators of the IOPZ are not prepared to remove the life-supports, many countries, including some from the region, are urging it in the guise of humanitarian concern, to terminate a lingering death. However, their motives could be otherwise. And thereby hangs a tale of efforts to provide for maritime security in one neck of the woods.

In its most recent effort to keep the IOPZ alive, the UN Ad Hoc Committee charged with giving effect to the original Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, called on states to submit their views on 'new alternative approaches' to resuscitate the IOPZ initiative. The 'new alternative approaches' suggested by Sri Lanka are a succinct formulation of its views on maritime security

Sri Lanka is of the view that, given the recent radical changes in the international environment, favourable opportunities now exist to realize the goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region. It suggests that the ad hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean be developed as a forum, comprising the permanent members of the Security Council, major maritime users and littoral and hinterland states of the Indian Ocean region to consider measures of regional and international importance The ad hoc Committee could suggest confidence-building measures covering both military as well as non-military aspects of security It could also develop economic cooperation in areas such as resource management, environmental issues, fisheries, shipping, telecommunications, both at regional and sub-regional levels. Naval cooperation among littoral and hinter land and other states could be developed; newer areas such as controlling illegal trafficking in drugs and the illegal transfer of arms could be undertaken.

It is clear that Sri Lanka, as a small state, favours the setting up of inter-governmental mechanisms as one way of safeguarding security interests of countries A country's security should not be the dependent variable of the state of its bilateral relations with a dominant neighbour, especially given the region's experience where bilateral issues are nurtured as pressure points.

These and other views submitted by various states are being discussed at the ad hoc committee. But the prospects that such ideas will fare better this time round are not encouraging. During the period of the U.S.-Soviet cold war, the peace zone proposal was viewed by the two superpowers as an unguided missile that could hurt a variety of superpower interests such as the free movement of nuclear-armed submarines and the availability of military bases in the Indian Ocean region.

While superpower interests in the region were the focus of concern, some of the interests of the regional powers got a free ride. When regional nuclear dangers were highlighted and measures to control them were put forward, these were sought to be side-tracked on the grounds that the main enemy was superpower rivalry and presence in the Indian Ocean Though the presence of Indo-Pakistan rivalry was always felt at the deliberations of the ad hoc committee, it took a back seat. However, with the end of the U.S.-Soviet cold war, this cover is no longer available to the Indo-Pakistan cold war

The greater danger now comes from attempts to unplug the UN life-support systems, an important flank in Sri Lanka's efforts at securing its maritime security. It reflects its preference for some inter-governmental mechanisms, be they at UN-level, regional or sub-regional. This is in addition to whatever policies it adopts at a bilateral or regional level in its immediate geographical context While only Sri Lanka's case is developed in this article, it is worthwhile to see how much of its experience is shared by some of the other smaller countries in the region.

In terms of age, SAARC is a latecomer on the scene of such institutions, having been set up only in 1985, largely due to the initiative of Bangladesh. At its preparatory stages there was a considerable amount of suspicion and resistance on India's part to the formation of such a grouping for South Asia, seeing the whole scheme as a Lilliputian attempt to tie down Gulliver. But when Indian suspicions were allayed, up went Pakistani suspicions. After all, anything that India agrees to must conceal an anti-Pakistan trap – the Indo-Pakistan cold war was at work. Considerable time was spent on trying to allay the different apprehensions of countries. Next, there were certain subjects that some countries considered taboo; India in particular was opposed to security matters being included in the frame of reference of SAARC. Eventually what was agreed to represented the lowest common denominator of subject areas

for SAARC. Basically, the exercise was not what SAARC *could* do, but rather an exercise in circumscribing what it *should* do. These suspicions and apprehensions were reflected in the Charter of SAARC signed by the seven Heads of State or Government on 8 December 1985 at Dhaka. SAARC would take decisions 'at all levels' 'on the basis of unanimity', and 'bilateral and contentious issues shall be excluded from deliberations'.

Though excluded by the rules of the club, the need to discuss political subjects, especially contentious bilateral ones, has been brought up by various members – Pakistan the subject of Kashmir; Bangladesh its water-sharing problems with India; Nepal its problems with India; and Sri Lanka the invasion of the country by India on 4 June 1987. But the 'no bilateral and contentious issues' rule prevented any discussion of such issues. Contentious issues were sometimes raised in a negative way from the point of view of the good of the organization. For example, with the IPKF in Sri Lanka, and no speedy withdrawal in sight as President Premadasa had requested, SAARC was held hostage by Sri Lanka's refusal to hold a summit when it was its turn to do so.

There have, however been more positive uses of the SAARC forum in spite of the 'no bilateral and contentious issues' rule. Informal discussions between Indian and Pakistani delegations at SAARC summits, with a little 'cricket diplomacy' thrown in, led to an agreement not to strike against each other's nuclear installations. Another was India's reported efforts to arrange a meeting between the Sri Lankan President and the LTTE chief during a SAARC summit at Bangalore. In the event, such a meeting did not take place Similarly, discussions among the Heads of State at the 1985 Dhaka summit gave the impetus to the formation of working groups and study groups to examine questions of terrorism and narcotics, which finally culminated in the adoption of two SAARC regional conventions on Suppression of Terrorism, and on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. These are subjects with clear security implications.

Thus, the possibilities of SAARC growing into these areas are not impossible, but the obstacles are Himalayan at present. As a result, SAARC is at present developing into a wide area of 'non-controversial' subjects, but without a matching depth

A recent initiative involving India as a prime mover is the effort to promote the Indian Ocean Rim Initiative. Representatives of seven states – Australia, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Oman, Singapore and South Africa met in Mauritius from 29-31 March 1995 to discuss the possibility of enhancing economic cooperation among countries of the Indian Ocean Rim Mauritius offered to establish a small coordinating unit to facilitate work on the project and provide support for the follow-up meetings.

There are some distinctly curious features about this new organization. There is a remarkable similarity between some of the provisions of the new grouping and those of SAARC. This makes one wonder whether this organization will go the way of SAARC 'Decisions on all matters and issues at all levels will be taken on the basis of consensus'; 'bilateral and other issues likely to generate controversy and be and impediment to regional cooperation efforts will be excluded from deliberations'. The sole focus of the organization will be economic cooperation. India's allergy to the inclusion of security matters is not surprising; but it makes one wonder what the whole exercise is about. Australia, another founder member of IORI had been inclined to adopt a broader agenda including security cooperation But it decided not to press this point in the face of strenuous Indian objections.

Hopes of promoting economic cooperation can only be vitiated by some other features of IORI. In the matter of membership of IORI, there is an unusual exclusivity attempted to be maintained. While membership is open to all countries within the geographical boundaries of the Indian Ocean, the communique issued at the end of the first meeting (29-31 March 1995) noted that opening up membership 'would be a gradual and evolutionary process in order to maintain coherence, pragmatism and momentum in the initiative'.

The proposed IORI Charter states that 'expansion of membership of the Association will be decided by Member States'. The original seven members seem as it were, to form an exclusive 'inner rim', with those joining later consigned to an 'outer rim'. Given the rule of consensus on all decision-making, members unacceptable to any one member can be 'blackballed' Though seven additional members have now been admitted to the 'outer rim' – Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Yemen, the secrecy shrouding the membership selection is difficult to penetrate. One can only note that Pakistan, an important Indian Ocean state, has still not made it to the outer rim Could the Indo-Pakistan cold war be at work?

The absence of a forum for countries of South Asia to collectively discuss matters pertaining to each country's security, as well as the region's security is a distinct disadvantage, especially for the smaller and weaker countries. Security for them depends on Indian benevolence. While India is acutely allergic to discussing security matters in SAARC, it canvassed vigorously to gain admission to the Regional Forum of ASEAN which solely discusses security matters Pakistan develops its own links outside SAARC to ensure its security. Perhaps their objective is to keep the smaller countries in a constantly insecure state of mind, another form of security to these less than self-confident larger states.

The prognosis for the future seems to be more of the same. Both Pakistan and India are engaged in an expensive arms race – already threatening to enter the nuclear realm – which can only add to the security concerns of states of the region. The recent exercise of the nuclear powers to restrain the nuclear threshold countries through a Comprehensive Test

Ban Treaty (CTBT) was an extremely important process for South Asia. Somehow the spotlight fell on India which felt it was being unfairly 'cornered'. Perhaps, the other nuclear threshold countries were tactically smarter. For spectators from South Asia there were moments of mild amusement during the negotiations, when India accused some western countries of hypocrisy, as if hypocrisy in inter-state relations is a western monopoly. On another occasion, India complained of the absence of a level playing field in the negotiations. But there has never been a level playing field in South Asia, especially for the smaller states. What is sauce for the (nuclear) goose is not sauce for the (nuclear threshold) gander So why complain?

The smaller South Asian states were witnessing a power struggle of sorts and could perfectly understand India's position in those terms The nuclear 'haves', under the argument of making the world a safer place, were attempting to maintain their monopoly over the prevailing currency of power – nuclear power. India was striving to enter this select band this is understandable, considering the long march to this end started when India decided in 1968 not to sign the NPT. It then decided to explode a nuclear device in 1974, and is now developing its own long range missiles that can carry nuclear warheads. And in all this, can Pakistan be far behind?

India's horizons are not confined to South Asia. She sees herself as capable of playing a role on the world scene as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. There is some irony in this quest, considering that security matters in South Asia are a subject which is taboo in the only available South Asian forum – SAARC. Without a forum where South Asian security concerns can be discussed, India's global ambitions, coupled with the lopsidedness that nuclear competition will bring to the prevailing South Asian power asymmetries, can only further restrict the spaces available to the smaller countries. But then, that is how this anarchic world is run!

South African maritime interests

GREG MILLS

> South Africa, with its island economy, cannot run the risk of under-investing in its Navy The concept of defending the coast is out of the question We are only planning for keeping two portals, the Maritime Defence Areas, open to secure access to the sea to international markets The SA Navy plans modest surface forces in each of the maritime defence areas based on a credible submarine deterrent Investing in a navy is investing not in a war fighting capability only, but also in the fight against seaborne crime, disasters, pollution and the dangers of the sea
>
> Vice-Admiral Robert Simpson-Anderson, Chief of the SA Navy [1]

SOUTH AFRICA'S naval role has long reflected its status as a maritime nation [2] This status is illustrated by the dependence of the Republic on the sea for its trade routes: some 95% of the tonnage and 80% in value of exports and imports annually pass through South African

[1] Please note that as of November 1996, US$1,00 = R4,70

1 Vice-Admiral R C Simpson-Anderson, 'Annual Policy Review of the South African Navy' Paper presented at the conference on *The Utility of Naval Power*, Cape Town, 17 October 1996

2 For a full elucidation on the nature of maritime security and policy issues for developing countries, see Greg Mills (ed), *Maritime Policy for Develop-*

ports. These ports handled over 144 million tonnes of freight in 1992, while in the same year the value of exports amounted to 22 5% of the value of South Africa's GDP. In 1993, 13,400 vessels with a total tonnage of 441 million called at South African ports. Trade amounts currently to 55% of GDP.[3]

With a coastline of 3,000 km and a 370 km Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) creating a patrol area of over 1.1 million km, excluding the possessions in the Prince Edward Island grouping in the South Atlantic and its associated EEZ,[4] the South African Navy has also a number of important secondary functions. These include safeguarding the fishing and mineral deposits inside the EEZ. By directly providing jobs for 18,000 people, the fishing industry is reported to indirectly support 100,000 South Africans. The catch in 1993 had an estimated value of R1.2 billion. The deep-sea, rock lobster and pelagic fishing industries combined had over 1,400 hulls in the water in 1992. The diamond mining sector turnover was an estimated R80 million in 1993, and the westcoast Mossgas oil-from-gas project R825 million in the same year. Tourism and the contribution of ship-builders and ship-repairers also add to the overall size of the South African maritime community's turnover which stands at R10 billion, or just under 3% of GDP.

South Africa also has obligations in Southern Africa where the region's other navies possess a negligible capability, and beyond. South Africa is a member of the International Hydrographic Organisation (IHO) and has responsibility, *inter alia*, for charting the IHO International Charting Group Area H which covers the area from Zaire to Kenya. The Republic (specifically the Department of the Environment) maintains the SANAE Antarctic research station, manned weather bases on Gough and Marion Islands, and the unmanned, automatic weather bases on the South Sandwich Islands of Zavadowski and Southern Thule.

Organisationally, South Africa is a member of. the Southern African Customs Union (SACU); the 12-member Southern African Development Community (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe – known also as SADC) which carries certain security obligations; the core group of the Indian Ocean Rim Cooperation (IORC) forum; and the Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic (ZPCSA) which it joined in 1994. In the latter regard, the South African Navy (SAN) stages a tri-annual exercise with the Argentine and other Latin American navies, known as the Atlasur exercises, and in 1996 took part in the annual U.S.-Latin American naval exercises (UNITAS) for the first time.[5]

From the end of the Second World War (1945) until the abrogation of the Simonstown Agreement with Britain in 1975, the role of the SAN was affected by the crosscurrent of Western cold war geostrategic sentiment. In this, the South Africans attempted to couch their interests in terms of a contribution to Western (anti-communist) security. This generated rhetoric about the importance of the Cape sea route as a regional shipping choke-point and of South Africa's ports, as well as the potential value of the country in human and material terms.

During the apartheid years, the navy's operational role reflected these cold war sentiments, and was described in the various Defence White Papers as the following:[6]

* 1977: 'The SA Navy continues to patrol the waters of the RSA and SWA, as well as the approaches to these waters'. This was managed in the light of 'the expansion of the Soviet Navy and deployment of its naval forces in both the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans (which) constitute a threat not only to the safety of the Cape sea-route, but also to the security of the RSA itself'.
* 1979: 'The Soviet potential for exerting an influence on maritime activities in the Southern African sphere has... increased significantly in recent years and should serve as a warning to the West. Steps have been taken to discourage and counter hostile activities in the South African area of maritime interest'. In this, 'The capability of the maritime elements of the SA Defence Force to meet their operational commitments associated with ensuring the security of the State is being developed through constant use of aircraft and ships'.
* 1982: 'The primary responsibility of the SA Navy. . is to ensure the RSA's right to use its surrounding waters and to deny this right to its enemies. An additional responsibility of the SA Navy is to help safeguard the RSA's maritime assets' The conventional maritime task 'includes the defence of the RSA's coastline and its harbours against offshore attacks, maritime reconnaissance of the RSA's offshore area of interest, and the exercise of the authority of the State in its territorial waters and economic exploitation zone. From time to time the SA Navy has also to exercise its right of peaceful passage through international waterways'.

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ing Nations Johannesburg The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) and the Centre for Defence and International Security Analysis (CDISS), 1995 For the current debate around the procurement of new vessels for the South African Navy, see Martin Edmonds and Greg Mills, *Uncharted Waters A Review of South Africa's Naval Force Options* Johannesburg SAIIA and CDISS, 1996 This article draws heavily on the latter publication

3 The statistics used in this section were derived from a number of sources See, for example, T J N Beukes, *A Survey of the South African Maritime Economy and Maritime Community during 1993* Cape Town. Institute for Maritime Technology, March 1994. T J.N Beukes, *Major Role Players in the South African Exclusive Economic Zone* Cape Town, Institute for Maritime Technology, March 1995.

4 These were annexed in Operation Snoektown during Christmas 1947-1948

5 See R C Simpson-Anderson, 'The Implications of International Co-operation in the South African Area of Maritime Interest', *African Defence Review*, 19, October 1994, pp 1-7

6 See Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence 1977*, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1979*, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1982*, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1984*, and *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1986*

* 1984: 'The aim of the SA Navy is to counter the maritime threat to the RSA and SWA in co-operation with the SA Air Force, to support the land battle, and to assist in safeguarding the maritime interests of the RSA and SWA'.
* 1986: 'The Navy is tasked to protect the harbours of the RSA and to safeguard property against insurgency attacks This is done mainly by the deployment of marines, who have been trained for counter-insurgency warfare, and by other navy personnel who undertake security services at SA naval installations and units'

To achieve the above tasks and functions, the navy reckoned that it required six frigate/corvette sized ships, four submarines plus assorted mine countermeasure-ships and support craft When the Type-12, or President-class, frigates were acquired from the UK in 1962-63, the surface complement stood at:
* Two W-class destroyers of 2,750 tons (fully laden)· SAS Jan van Riebeck (acquired in 1950) and SAS Simon van der Stel (1953).
* One Type 15 (or Z-class) Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) frigate of 2,730 tons· SAS Vrystaat (1956).
* Three Type 12 (President) class Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) frigates of 2,605 tons SAS President Kruger (1962), SAS President Steyn (1963), and SAS President Pretorius (1964).
* Three Loch-class frigates of 2,400 tons: SAS Good Hope (1944), SAS Natal (1945), and SAS Transvaal (1945).

It was hoped that given the impending retirement of six ageing ships (the W-class, Type 15 and Loch-class) of this force of nine, the SAN's blue-water capability would be augmented Efforts to acquire new ships included
* 1970 the procurement of three Leander 'broad-beam' general purpose (GP) frigates from the UK under the new Heath government For political reasons, this did not materialise.
* 1971. four Joao Coutinho-class GP frigates of 1,380 tons were ordered under 'Project Taurus' from the Empressa Nacional Bazan shipyards in Spain with Portugal acting 'as an intermediary'. Based on a German Blohm and Voss design, the length of the ships (84.6 metres) was shorter than the optimum waterline length (100 metres) required for South Africa's stormy waters. As a result, this procurement was seen, in the SAN's eyes to be the first of many 'political decisions', this time made because the Portuguese government owed South Africa considerable amounts of money, and not because the ships were ideally suited to South Africa's needs However, delivery of the four ships was embargoed after the Portuguese coup on 25 April 1974 and were instead sold to the Portuguese Navy.
* 1975: two Aviso A-69 ASW/anti-ship corvettes of 1,250 tons were ordered from France. Again, the SAN felt that this procurement decision was made primarily on political grounds given that France and South Africa had developed a 'cosy' relationship in the supply of Mirage F-1 jet-fighters, Alouette and Puma helicopters, Transall C-160 transport aircraft, and the construction of the nuclear power-station at Koeberg. Today SAN personnel openly admit that the length of the Avisos, only 76 metres, would have made them 'hell in the Cape waters'. The ships were embargoed on 8 November 1977 after the SAS Good Hope had already been commissioned.[7]
* 1976· 'Project Burlap' for locally-produced, overseas-designed 1,700 ton, 85 metre patrol corvettes went 'as far as the tender/contract specifications' before being scrapped in 1979.
* 1980 'Project Lumeen' allowed for the complete re-engineering of the Type 12 President-class frigates. The steam turbines were to be replaced by diesel engines, hangar space created for two Puma helicopters, two 76mm guns, Gabriel/Skerpieon missiles, and two 3-barrelled torpedo tubes fitted, and a new mast and superstructure, radar and new sonar installed. However, the R169 million programme was scrapped in 1985 by Defence Minister Magnus Malan who 'did not want surface ships but submarines instead'.
* 1985: 'Project Foreshore' provided for a four-ship frigate programme for 2,500 ton ships to be built in South Africa to a Spanish design. The project was cancelled in 1991 by Magnus Malan because of the high cost of building such vessels locally, estimated to be around R3 billion. This was the first programme which followed the drafting of the full Naval Staff Requirement (NSR 6) in 1980 for new surface vessels, the requirement which was subsequently revised in 1988 and 1993. After its approval in June 1993, it formed the basis of the patrol corvette programme which is still under deliberation in November 1996.

Instead of receiving the blue water surface ships required, the SAN was given the nine Minister-class (alternatively known as 'Saar 4' or Reshef-class) fast-attack craft (FAC, but more commonly known as strike-craft), three of which were built in Israel, and the remaining six at the Sandock Austral yard in Durban. Well-armed for their size and fast, these craft are not suited to South African waters being only 450 tons and 54 metres in length This purchase was the result of a contract that was signed with Israel in late-1974.

Similarly, the logistic support vessel, SAS Drakensberg, which was commissioned in 1986 was 'not really what the navy needed'. The first (and only) of an intended two-ship project, the construction of the 12,500 ton Drakensberg allegedly was strategically linked to the survival of the Sandock Austral yard. With this (like the Minister-class strike-craft), the navy again fell victim to a combination of the UN embargo and decisions made on political, rather than sound operational, grounds

In its ambition for a blue water surface capability, the navy was clearly undermined by the army dominated defence policy-making process. Despite these on-going programmes, the 1984 Defence White Paper stated that the navy *required* 'strike-craft, submarines, coastal defence vessels, harbour defence

7 For a fascinating account, see Alan Du Toit, *South Africa's Fighting Ships Past and Present* Rivonia Ashanti, 1992, pp 282-286

boats and fleet support vessels' to 'counter the maritime threat to the RSA'.[8]

Yet the SAN also experienced abnormal hassles, even by the standards of the embargo era, in its submarine acquisition programme. Originally the three Daphne-class boats were to be supplemented by two French Agosta-class submarines, the Astrant and Adventurous, but these were embargoed along with the A-69 corvettes before delivery could be made in November 1977. In the mid-1980s, Armscor secretly acquired the plans to build Type-1500/1600 patrol submarines from designs supplied by the German shipbuilders Howaldswerke Deutsche Werft (HDW) and the design-studio Ingenieurkontor Lubeck (IKL) Detailed plans and facilities were prepared, but the project was scrapped in July 1988.

The acquisition process of a blue water surface capability by the SAN necessary to carry out its tasks, given the nature of its functions and the sea-state off the South African coast, was thus bedevilled by extraordinary misfortune Clearly, if measured against the scale of land-based and air force procurements, the SAN was low down the priority list presumably on account of its peripheral role in the border conflicts.

As the domestic and, accordingly, regional and international climates changed in the early 1990s, the navy has stressed its peacetime (secondary) functions. Vice-Admiral Robert Simpson-Anderson defined these in 1993 as.[9]

Wartime roles: the defence of maritime communications, territory and offshore assets. and the launching of offensive missions against enemy communications, territory and offshore assets.

Peacetime roles: diplomatic 'showing of the flag'; disaster relief, search and rescue, fishery protection duties; pollution control; customs and excise, the combatting of piracy; and the support of scientific programmes notably hydrography To this could presumably be added skills training through the artisan and officer-training programmes

The SAN has actively carried out these peacetime roles Since January 1990, it has carried out 32 diplomatic missions to 62 countries Some 32 SAR missions and one piracy interception have occurred On average, according to the Maritime Communications Centre at Silvermine, 10-15 fishing ships are boarded and searched each month in the area of responsibility stretching from Namibia on the West coast to Port Elizabeth in the East. Around 15-20 tankers (and 40 other vessels) pass the Cape daily in the month of December 1995, 311 westbound tankers (4.9 million tons) rounded the Cape, and 216 eastbound. Some 800 fishing activities involving 170 trawlers were reported in this area of responsibility in January 1996

Silvermine can monitor shipping in an area from the Ivory Coast to the Kenyan border, and it is also tasked to look out for naval and research maritime movements from Latin America to the Straits of Malacca From the mid-1980s, information acquired on vessel movements has been programmed into a Shipping Information System At another level, since January 1990, 400 civilian and 1,190 uniformed artificers had undergone or were undergoing training in the navy

Any assessment of South Africa's maritime assets has to look beyond just those of the SAN, particularly given the calls for the abdication of the SAN's patrol capability to a civilian agency.

The SAN is, as noted, seen to be the 'Cinderella' of the four services of the SANDF Its income declined from around 18% of the defence budget in 1977 to 6.2% in 1990, but has gradually risen again to 8.5% in 1991, 8.6% in 1992, 8.5% in 1993, 7.3% in 1994 and 9 3% in 1995. The army and air force continue to receive a lion's share of the budget allocation.

During the period 1985-94 rationalisations and reductions in the defence budget resulted in a decline in the number of ships from 37 to 24 and in personnel from 15,000 to 8,300. Major rationalisation in personnel strength occurred in 1989 when the SAN 'lost' 2,400 of 13,000, which necessitated the disbandment of the Marine Branch which had been established in 1979.

South African Defence Budget: 1994-1995

Service	*Rmillion*	*% of Total*
SA Army	3,900,148	34 40
SA Air Force	3,478,485	30 70
SA Navy	820,973	7 25
SA Medical Service	644,596	5 70
Staff Division	1,728,756	15 30
Integration	749,628	6.60
TOTAL	11,322,586	100 00

As of January 1996, the inventory of hulls is·

* Nine Minister-class strike-craft. Built between 1976-85, due to their age, only six of these vessels will be in service by the year 2000 (with 4 on duty, 2 in refit), with the final vessel ultimately being retired by 2006
* Three Daphne-class submarines. Constructed between 1968-70, there have been already 15 major refits to these vessels. Although the pressure hulls and machinery are sound, and the subs are in the process of receiving new wire-guided torpedoes and electronics suites, these are the last Daphnes that remain in continuous operation worldwide As such, they are difficult and expensive to maintain, spare parts will be increasingly hard to acquire and the last will probably be withdrawn from service in 2005.
* Eight mine countermeasure vessels. Of these, four Ton-class minesweepers have been comprehensively refitted (in which the hulls are totally replanked at around 10% of the cost of replacing the ships) in Simonstown. This should see them good for service until 2010. The four River-class minehunters were commissioned in 1981
* The hydrographic survey ship SAS Protea (launched in 1971), will re-enter service in mid-1996 after a full refit including a re-engine.
* Two auxiliary ships, the 12,500 ton SAS Drakensberg (launched in 1986) and the

8 See Republic of South Africa, *White Paper on Defence and Armaments Supply 1984*, p 8

9 R C Simpson-Anderson, 'The Changing Role of the South African Navy', *South African Defence Review*, 10, 1993, p 16

SAS Outeniqua which was purchased from the Ukraine in 1991 for US$12 million.

* The SAS Fleur diving support vessel launched in 1969 as the first operational vessel to be designed and built in South Africa.
* Three 'T'-craft, 22 metre coastal patrol craft launched first in 1992.
* One air-sea rescue vessel launched in 1973
* Six landing craft known as 'Delta' boats
* 28 'Namacurra' harbour protection boats, first commissioned in 1978

In surveying the above list, it is clear that the SAN has a number of strategic gaps in its inventory: there is no ASW capability, as the SAN's key blue-water surface component, the Minister-class strike-craft are unsuitable for South African waters; there is no over-the-horizon surveillance or offensive helicopter platform, and there is only a limited maritime air-surveillance capability with the turbo-prop 50-year old DC-3 Dakotas These aircraft have only a limited range. More importantly, their radars are capable only of 'seeing' 20 nautical miles either side. The age of the SAN's vessels will result in 'block' naval obsolescence in the navy's combat capacity by 2005.

The South African Police Services (SAPS), the Department of the Environment (DOE), the Department of Transport (DOT) and the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI) all operate a range of vessels in policing and other auxiliary roles.

The SAPS has 120 small craft, mostly towable inflatables, plus two 35 tonne vessels. The focus on small craft reflects the incidence of most crimes (93%) within 12 nautical miles and 73% within 1 nautical mile of the beach.

The Department of the Environment is responsible for the conservation of renewable marine resources in South Africa's EEZ To do so, the DOE operates the following vessels

* Four Kuswag vessels and one aircraft for oil pollution tasks
* Four vessels for research purposes: the SAS Agulhas (6,123 tons), Africana (2,522 tons), Algoa (760 tons) and Sardinops (255 tons). Three smaller ships are used mainly for fisheries research.

The Nature Conservation Division of the Cape Provincial Administration has seven vessels tasked with the physical protection of sea fisheries. Two vessels, Protectors I and II, can patrol out to 12 nautical miles. Four others, the Malagas II, Patella, Pelagus and Jasus, are 20-22 metres in length and can patrol 50 nm out The 50 metre Custos is equipped to patrol the whole EEZ

The South African Search and Rescue Organisation (SASAR) which is funded and administered by the Department of Transport, has aircraft and ships provided by a variety of sources and services· the SA Air Force, Court Helicopters, the SA Navy, DOT, Portnet, Safair, South African Airways, three deep-sea tugs from Pentow Marine, and the NSRI. The last-named possesses 50 craft, varying in length from 3-13 metres.

Finally, there are an estimated 100,000 private (unregistered) craft used for tourism, recreation and commercial fishing An estimated 70,000 of these are used in the coastal environment.

South Africa's foreign policy obligations are tied, in the immediate sense, to its fellow members of the Southern African Development Community Pretoria's politico-security interests and, increasingly, its economic fortunes are inextricably linked to the stability of particularly its neighbouring states.

Further afield, South Africa will increasingly also have to look to both the nations of the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean for political, security and economic partnerships.[10] The latter will clearly be the overwhelming imperative of President Nelson Mandela's South Africa, as it attempts to find new trade and investment partners out of the old apartheid moulds. Thus, the ties that bring states together in both the nascent Indian Ocean Rim Community forum and the South Atlantic Rim will, overwhelmingly, rest then on a complex and synergetic understanding built on a commonality of political, economic as well as security factors.

In the security domain, there is a need to address both macro and micro-security concerns, at the level, respectively, of traditional sovereign 'state security' and 'new security agenda' issues such as small arms proliferation, landmines, drug trafficking, the protection of resources and the environment and navigation The sharing of maritime-related technology – such as ship-repair and building – is another functional area of mutual concern which could serve to bring nations together.

In this regard, while there will always be some danger of competition, clearly the sharing of resources as has occurred through the Indian Navy's assistance to Mauritius in 1996 in the operation of the new 1,300 ton Guardian-class offshore patrol vessel, should hopefully improve the prospects for closer regional co-operation.

As will be gauged from the procurement 'saga' outlined above, the SAN has had a long-standing requirement for new naval vessels. However, the changes in the South African political system and, consequently, government, have meant further delays to the procurement (potentially) of four new blue-water patrol vessels At the time of writing (November 1996), it was still not clear whether this procurement would be given the green light The go-ahead largely depends on the finalisation of the 'new' South Africa's overall force structure plan for the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), the so-called 'Defence Review Process'.

Yet without new purchases, as is noted above, the SAN will face block obsolescence of its fleet in the early part of the next century. This will certainly have a bearing on its ability to interact in the maritime-naval domain on both its western and eastern (Indian Ocean) seaboards.

10 See Greg Mills, 'South African-Latin American Maritime Co-operation Towards A South Atlantic Rim Community?', and also, P J Botha, 'Security and Co-operation in the Indian Ocean Rim' Both papers presented at the conference on *The Utility of Naval Power*, Cape Town, 17 October 1996

Australian perceptions

SAM BATEMAN

THE year 1995 was a busy one for regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. It set in motion much activity aimed at building links between countries in the region to improve their economic growth performance and social welfare. Major multilateral activities in Mauritius during March and August 1995 focused on economic and trade issues. A rather larger international conference in Perth, Western Australia, in June 1995 represented a 'second track' meeting with a broad agenda, drawing together regional business leaders and academics, as well as officials. India and Australia have both played leading roles in these activities with India hosting the first meetings of the Indian Ocean Research Network (IORN) and Indian Ocean Business Network (IOBN) at New Delhi in December 1995.

Although security was not specifically on the agenda at these meetings, it has not been far off it. It is hoped that economic growth in the region will enhance prospects for regional security while encouraging cooperation and dialogue on economic and trade issues into the management of security problems. This has been the experience in the Pacific where the Pacific Economic Cooperation Committee (PECC), a 'second track' forum, laid the foundations for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Group (APEC), which was also facilitated by an awareness of the benefits of economic cooperation for regional security. Despite initial setbacks with the establishment of multilateral security dialogue in the Asia Pacific region, and the hesitation of some regional countries to participate, dialogue is now institutionalised with the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)[1] and associated 'second track' and inter-sessional meetings.

Australia has been particularly keen to translate the Pacific experience to the Indian Ocean, including use of the 'building blocks' and 'second track' activities which have worked well in the Pacific. Building blocks involve starting the habit of cooperation and dialogue on issues where common ground is more apparent, and later moving to the more difficult and contentious issues. In finding possible building blocks for the Indian Ocean, maritime interests and activities, including a common concern among regional countries for maritime security, offer a particularly fertile and rewarding ground for multilateral cooperation and dialogue. The Indian Ocean itself is the major common interest of all littoral and island countries. A large proportion of the

1 For a recent critical appraisal of the ARF see Michael Leifer, 'The ASEAN Regional Forum', Adelphi Paper 302, Oxford University Press (for the IISS), Oxford, 1996

world's seaborne trade transits some part of the Indian Ocean or the other and, despite its resource potential and environmental significance, the ocean remains relatively under-researched in oceanographic and meteorological terms.

Australia and India have a major role to play in promoting maritime cooperation and dialogue among regional countries. These two countries are the preeminent maritime powers in the region, each with extensive maritime interests and a particular concern for maritime security – Australia because it is an island continent which can only be attacked from over the sea, and India because of a deep and long-standing appreciation of the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean in its national security

Australia tended to forget in the past that it has a long seaboard to the Indian Ocean and extensive Indian Ocean interests. Despite an occasional burst of enthusiasm and until comparatively recently, the Indian Ocean has generally been neglected in Australia's external relations, and well down on the priority list of national security concerns More attention has been paid to economic and strategic issues in the Pacific Ocean and East Asia than in the Indian Ocean In 1984, Bill Hayden, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Australia's former Governor-General, told an audience, appropriately in Perth, that 'In public affairs and in political discourse – the Indian Ocean has normally been more down the priority scale than up.'[2]

The reasons for Australia's neglect of the Indian Ocean are not hard to find

* Australia's population and industrial infrastructure is concentrated largely in the South East of the continent.

* The traditional threat perspective has been of a threat to the East coast – in colonial days and the first part of this century of a threat from Russia and/or Germany, and during World War II of Japanese invasion through Papua New Guinea

2 Speech by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Bill Hayden, MP, to the Australian Institute of International Affairs, Perth, 20 June 1984

* The defence alliance with the United States is the key element of Australia's security policy and the Pacific has been the main focus of that alliance.

Before the regional cooperation initiatives of 1995, the last major flurry of Australian activity in the Indian Ocean occurred in the early 1980s, largely as a reaction to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The main focus then was defence and security with deployments of Australian naval vessels to the northwest Indian Ocean, regular long range maritime surveillance patrols by P-3C aircraft from Cocos Island and Diego Garcia, and a modest Defence Cooperation programme with some of the small Indian Ocean island countries.

Apart from the general geo-strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, Australia has three specific interests in the ocean:

i) The offshore territories in the Indian Ocean over which Australia has sovereignty – primarily Cocos and Christmas Islands, but also Ashmore and Cartier Islands south of Timor and Heard and MacDonald Islands in the Southern Ocean.

ii) Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) – just over 50% of Australia's seaborne trade by weight is carried on Indian Ocean SLOCs, including heavy crude oil imports from the Middle East.

ii) Offshore resources from the extensive continental shelf of Australia, which extends into the Indian Ocean, with rich oil and gas reserves essential for Australia's energy self-sufficiency in the future.

Australia's 1987 Defence White Paper announced that half of the RAN fleet would be relocated from Sydney to Cockburn Sound near Perth where the naval base, HMAS Stirling, would be further developed. While these plans remain on track and all the RAN's new Collins class submarines are to be based in Western Australia, much of the operational activity in the Indian Ocean that commenced in the early 1980s dwindled away in the late 1980s with the end of the cold war.

The sustained momentum in the 1990s for Australia's naval move to the West is now largely explained by domestic factors rather than by strategic concerns. The pressures of urbanisation on the main naval bases in the Sydney area, including Garden Island Dockyard and the submarine base, HMAS Platypus, have undoubtedly played a role, and Western Australian politicians, especially the previous Deputy Prime Minister and former Defence Minister (now Leader of the Opposition), Kim Beazley, are influential in setting an Indian Ocean agenda. The Liberal-National Party coalition government which came into power in March 1996 seems likely to maintain support for the Indian Ocean programmes initiated by the previous Labour government. In security terms, there remains the consideration that present and possible operating areas for Australian naval forces in Southeast Asian waters are much closer to HMAS Stirling than to bases on the East coast.

It has been said that 'For millenia the Indian Ocean probably witnessed more maritime activity than any other ocean'.[3] The Indian Ocean people had a long tradition of oceanic navigation before Columbus crossed the Atlantic. A long-distance seaborne trade between Africa and South Asia, around the Arabian Sea and between South and Southeast Asia, was well established before the Europeans entered the Indian Ocean. The sea has always been an important source of food for regional peoples

Little has changed to the present day Maritime activities remain a common interest of most littoral and all island countries. The living resources of the Indian Ocean are exploited both by littoral and island countries, as well as by distant-water fishing countries The ocean is rich in mineral and biotic resources, and its shipping routes carry a large proportion of the world's seaborne trade. They con-

3 J C Caldwell, 'Population and Development in the Indian Ocean Region', in Alex Kerr (ed), *The Indian Ocean Region – Resources and Development* University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 1981, p 8

nect regional countries with each other, as well as Europe, North America and East Asia Of great strategic significance, they carry oil from the Gulf to the Suez Canal, around the Cape of Good Hope or to the Malacca Straits. Most trade between the economically dynamic East Asia and the Middle East and Europe crosses the Indian Ocean It is by necessity that the vast majority of trade in the region is carried by sea with consequent problems of maritime safety, and risks to both the security of the nations dependent on the trade, and to the marine environment.

Due mainly to the importance of Indian Ocean SLOCs, non-littoral countries also have a concern for maritime security in the region and a claim to be involved in Indian Ocean matters During the cold war, the Indian Ocean was a focus of superpower competition with significant naval forces of the United States and the Soviet Union regularly deployed into the region. The United States, as the remaining superpower, still claims vital strategic interests in the region and maintains naval forces there. By virtue of small island territories, as well as economic interests, France and the United Kingdom are non-littoral western states directly involved in the affairs of the Indian Ocean

The importance of maritime security is not only part of the traditional concept of security against military threats. It is perhaps even more important when a comprehensive approach to security is adopted and non-military threats to security are considered as well. Many of the potential threats to economic security, community well-being, resource security, social welfare, and environmental security are manifested primarily in the context of a nation's relationship with the sea. There is also the reality of the maritime environment that countries can rarely take a truly independent, national view either of their maritime security interests or of the problems that can arise from their uses of the seas.

The maritime environment is basically an international environment. Relevant concerns follow no national boundaries. Nations have to talk about and agree on issues such as the principles of the Law of the Sea, the prevention of marine pollution, the conservation of fish stocks, the safety and security of shipping, the delimitation of maritime boundaries, the monitoring of sea levels, and the responsible development of the mineral resources which may lie on or under the seabed

Cooperation and dialogue between regional countries on specific matters of common concern in the maritime environment will make a major contribution to maritime security in the region. It will be incumbent upon Australia and India to take the lead in promoting this cooperation. As well as being the leading littoral maritime powers, these two countries also have the necessary skills and expertise in fields such as marine scientific research, marine safety, search and rescue (SAR), and the prevention of marine pollution. They are also the most capable naval nations in the region

Three main factors establish the central significance of marine scientific research as a possible area for initial cooperation First, there is the fundamental importance of marine and maritime industries (eg, fishing, shipping, offshore oil and gas development, and marine tourism) to many regional countries. Developments in these industries should be based on sound scientific and technological research Secondly, there are the particular characteristics of the Indian Ocean and its influence on regional and global weather, including the Enhanced Greenhouse Effect, and the prevalence of natural disasters (eg, tropical storms, floods, drought, storm surges) in the region – some of which are predictable. Thirdly, there is the fact that the Indian Ocean is relatively under-researched compared with the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Knowledge gained elsewhere cannot necessarily be extrapolated to the Indian Ocean due to its particular oceanographic and topographic peculiarities

Cooperation in search and rescue, marine safety and the prevention of ship-sourced marine pollution is important because of the quantity of shipping using the Indian Ocean, the dependence of regional countries on seaborne trade, the incidence of focal areas with a high density of shipping traffic, the prevalence of adverse weather conditions, particularly to the south, and the vulnerability of some littoral areas to marine environmental degradation. It is also significant that, in comparison with the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, generally fewer regional countries are parties to relevant international conventions, and procedures for Port State Control and regional SAR are relatively underdeveloped. Australia has a particular interest in these matters due to its large SAR area of responsibility, and its interest in the safety of bulk shipping and marine environmental protection.

The process of 'second track' diplomacy may assist in promoting maritime cooperation and security. This process runs parallel to and frequently influences the official channels through ministers and officials. The Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP) is the main contemporary example of institutionalised 'second track' dialogue in the Asia Pacific region. CSCAP is designed to focus the research activities of non-governmental agencies working on security issues in the Asia Pacific region, and to provide linkage between these activities and official regional security cooperation processes.

Of relevance to this paper, CSCAP has established a working group to look specifically at maritime security cooperation in the Asia Pacific region. This group has adopted a broad view of security and is taking onboard a range of small 's' security issues, such as marine safety, resources conservation, coastal and marine zone management and unlawful activities at sea (eg, drug smuggling, illegal population movements, piracy), as well as more conventional maritime security issues. These maritime activities are regarded as excellent vehicles for developing the habit of cooperation and the concept of common security in the region.

There could be advantage in establishing a multilateral forum of Indian Ocean regional countries to address marine affairs of common interest. This could take the form of a Council for Maritime Cooperation in the Indian Ocean (CMCIO) as a 'building block' for maritime security and as a 'second track' activity. It could be modelled on CSCAP but would deal only with the maritime environment. This would keep clear of the more politically sensitive problems of the land environment and take full advantage of the extent of common interest in marine affairs The CMCIO would manage and advise on marine science and technological research priorities, education and training opportunities in marine fields, data collection and information exchange, and the regional response to natural disasters, drugs, piracy, maritime safety, marine pollution, SAR, and so on.

During the cold war, Australia and India often opposed each other on Indian Ocean issues, particularly over the involvement of non-littoral states in the region. The situation has now changed, however, and the security concerns that remain are much more amenable to being addressed in a regional context than in the light of global considerations. Maritime security concerns are particularly prominent in the region and these are a major common interest of Australia and India By any measure, Australia and India are the two preeminent maritime powers among Indian ocean littoral states.

Notwithstanding the activity of the last year or two, the sense of community among Indian Ocean littoral and island states remains weak in comparison with the economic and other interests that have drawn the Asia Pacific countries together in recent years Building a sense of regional community in the region is not going to be easy. Indian Ocean countries are a diverse lot and finding common interests to stimulate cooperation and dialogue will be difficult. The maritime environment, including the widely shared concern for maritime security, provides a host of common interests, and Australia and India are well placed and qualified to take a joint lead in promoting the necessary cooperation and dialogue.

Books

BLUEPRINT TO BLUEWATER: The Indian Navy 1951-65 by Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh. Lancer International, New Delhi, 1992

SEA POWER AND INDIAN SECURITY by Rahul Roy-Chaudhury. Brassey's, London and Washington, 1995.

WAR IN THE INDIAN OCEAN by Vice Admiral Mihir K. Roy. Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, 1995.

IF the three books under review are any evidence, then finally and happily, quality writing and research on the contemporary Indian Navy are here. Long ago, the Indian Navy found its Boswell in Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh; in young Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, a research officer with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, it may well have a formidable champion of its interests Vice Admiral Mihir K. Roy, who held some critical posts in the navy at important times, is exceptionally qualified to educate the reader about the country's naval policies and the Indian Navy's war record, a job he does with great aplomb.

Singh, unofficially asked to write an authoritative history of the service, has put together internal documents and personal recollections of several naval personnel His insights, derived from his own distinguished career, are put to excellent use in two books – the one reviewed here and the earlier *Under Two Ensigns: The Indian Navy 1945-50.* Roy-Chaudhury has written a discriminating, dispassionate and comprehensive account of the development of the Indian Navy from a coastal flotilla to a formidable power in the Indian Ocean and its littoral. His book is significant for it relies on British Admiralty archives to flesh out certain troubling aspects of the British stewardship of the Indian Navy until 1958 and the appointment of Vice-Admiral R.D. Katari as the first Indian Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), an event which Singh, understandably, is reticent about. Admiral Roy, on the other hand, has fewer inhibitions in recalling the mindset that influences the conduct of war (or, as he reveals in the case of Admiral Soman during the 1965 India-Pakistan conflict, the conduct of 'No War') and the dysfunctional organisational structures and biases of the military establishment which, if not checked, bode ill for the future

The Indian Navy, more than the other armed services, had difficulty in shaking off its British past and traditions. At its most affable, this included the pre-lunch gimlet and post-prandial port; at another level, it also imbibed the Royal Navy's fighting skills and thirst for action, a quality first manifested in the minor actions in Junagadh and Goa. These were visible when Vice-Admiral B.S. Soman, then naval chief, repeatedly requested the government to use the navy more aggressively in the 1965 war. This was, for unknown reasons, turned down and later more forceful efforts were made by the CNS, Admiral S.M. Nanda, to pre-empt New Delhi from imposing any naval passivity during the 1971 operations. These, besides the blockade of erstwhile East Pakistan, resulted in the use of the fast Osa missile boats, towed all the way offshore to strike Karachi.

This generally is the line that Singh and Roy-Chaudhury take. Roy, in his account of the wars India has fought, which forms the substance of his book, is more candid and critical than the other two. He is withering about Admiral Soman's helmsmanship and is particularly contemptuous of his timidity in dealing with the overbearing General J.N. Chaudhuri. As the GOC-in-C Southern Command directing the Goa liberation in 1962 and as Chief of Army Staff in 1965, Chaudhuri simply shunted Soman and the navy out of the operational picture, which, according to Roy, the CNS unforgivably acquiesced in

Roy is even harsher about certain commanders and some arguable tactics employed in the 1971 war, like the deployment of the dated Indian (ex-British) Type-14 anti-submarine warfare frigates against the Pakistani (ex-French) Daphne-class submersibles whose sonar outranged those

onboard Indian ships. Luckily for India, as the Admiral notes, this did not result in any mishap He is particularly scathing about the Western Fleet Commander Vice Admiral 'Chandy' Kuruvilla's meek and confused handling. This led to the cruiser (Flagship INS Mysore) and its task-force meandering about the Arabian Sea, fearful of shore-based Pakistani Mirage fighter-bomber aircraft, rather than directly engaging in its primary mission of opening up the ship's 4.5-inch guns on Karachi and the Makran Coast. Roy contrasts this attitude with the derring-do of the young K-25 Squadron commanders whose Styx-missile hits on Karachi caused demoralisation and havoc in the Pakistan Navy.

This bright record in the west was complemented in the Bay of Bengal with the 'blooding' of the aircraft carrier which was kept out of harm's way both in Goa and during the 1965 war The Vikrant task-force enforced a thorough blockade of East Pakistan, so that Niazi's four crack divisions could neither do a Dunkirk nor replenish their supplies.

Roy, Director of Naval Intelligence during that war, sheds light on a hitherto unpublicized aspect of the 1971 war when he writes of the daring and highly motivated Mukti Bahini frogmen With improvised snorkels made from hollow bamboo reeds, they managed to attach limpet mines to targeted hulls and pillars, executing breathtaking swimming manoeuvres to escape the explosion in the murky sea and river waters of Bangladesh. He also informs us that more than 100,000 tons of enemy shipping plying the sea and interior river routes were thus destroyed, bringing the Pakistan Army resupply down to a trickle and placing it at a disadvantage even before the war formally began. Eisenhower once estimated that anti-Nazi resistance groups active behind the lines were worth 20 divisions to the Allies in the European theatre during the Second World War. While no figure for the operational worth of the Mukti Bahini guerillas, Bengali frogmen and demolition experts has ever been hazarded, it must have been enormous if Admiral Roy's accounts are anything to go by

According to him, the Bangladesh war was a tremendous success because of a system of inter-arms cooperation and centralisation of war planning the COAS General Manekshaw with the willing participation of Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lal and Admiral Nanda had cobbled together. Moreover, Manekshaw was strong enough to ward off the political pressures for premature military action and also managed to secure the complete confidence of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi Roy, in an undercurrent to his text, seems unsure of similar success in the future. Like other distinguished men in uniform, he pleads for integrated military thinking and for organisational instruments like the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to prevent the kind of planning, intelligence, command and control snafus and 'friendly fire' incidents that have routinely marred India's wars, 1971 included

Roy attributes many of the navy's teething troubles to the protracted process of 'Indianization' of the service, which meant that in the first 11 years or so, three British Commanders-in-Chief – Vice Admirals Edward Parry, Mark Pizey, and Stephen Carlill – succeeded each other at the helm, and the service was set to become little more than an operational adjunct of the Royal Navy. As Roy-Chaudhury implies, in preferring to replace Rear-Admiral J.T.S. Hall of the Royal Indian Navy as the naval chief by Parry, a Royal Navy stalwart selected by Mountbatten, the government of free India may have erred grievously. While Hall, dedicated to his service and intent on seeing it become a major player in the Indian Ocean area, devised an ambitious plan for an all-round development of the Indian Navy into a balanced force of major surface and sub-surface combatants capable of venturing into the bluewater realm, Parry was more circumspect in defining a role for it as a mainly brownwater force, able only to protect harbours, ward off in a small way the threat from lurking enemy submarines and otherwise to depend on the Royal Navy's presence east of Suez for any major engagements.

The Hall Plan proposed that within a decade the naval strength must rise to two fleets, one each for the western and eastern coasts; that each be configured around a light aircraft carrier, and that the two light carriers quickly give way to four fleet carriers hosting a total of 280 strike/fighter aircraft, with the first of the large carriers to be inducted no later than 1954. It is another matter that over the years, the paucity of funds and New Delhi's defence priorities have contrived to leave the service woefully short of meeting Hall's design for two powerful fleets. Far from owning four fleet carriers, the Indian Navy, some 50 years on, has just two light carriers of 20,000 tons or less, of which the Vikrant is nearly defunct and the Viraat close to decommissioning.

Parry, Pizey and Carlill, as Singh points out, sought mainly to ensure both that the Indian Navy did not become a serious threat or competitor to the Royal Navy in the Indian Ocean and remained hooked disadvantageously to British suppliers This resulted in a policy tartly described by Singh as one of 'maximising (British) commercial benefits by turning its "lame ducks" into money spinners'. It also involved a three-year loan of three mothballed Hunt-class destroyers (upgraded at Indian expense) to the Indian Navy, enabling them to be reinducted into the Royal Navy without burdening the British Treasury!

The fashioning of the Indian Navy by its British chiefs into a limited, defensive force comprising mainly of anti-submarine warfare (ASW) ships and minesweepers led, as Singh reveals, to the Blackwood-class ASW frigates – Khukri, Kirpan and Kuthar – being handed over *sans* standard equipment like the four 21-inch torpedo tubes. Indeed, apart from the antiquated cruiser, Rajput, no other capital ship in the Indian Navy of the 1950s embarked torpedoes – the most feared anti-ship weapon of its time. Roy-Chaudhury piles on more such evidence and adds that the

Vikrant was fitted without the long-stroke catapult necessary to launch bigger, longer-range, fighter-bomber aircraft. Nor would the British C-in-Cs, prompted by the Admiralty in London, countenance an Indian Navy with submarines It was only in 1965 that India, frustrated by London's stonewalling, evinced interest in the Soviet Foxtrot-class hunter-killer submarine. U.K. responded reluctantly with an offer: not the Porpoise-class boats the Indian Navy desired which was rejected but of obsolete 'A'-class vessels.

As both sailors ruefully point out, the British justified not giving the Indian Navy what they called 'offensive' wherewithal like torpedoes, submarines and a carrier-based long-range air force, by referring to the 'Gandhian' doctrine of non-violence fervently espoused by Nehru, thus hoisting India with its own petard. Ironically, the British connection is still valorized by the service and, as Singh's history makes clear, Mountbatten's contributions are generously acknowledged

Vice-Admiral Roy, more than Rear-Admiral Singh and analyst Roy-Chaudhury, clearly asserts that the abrupt turn away from the British after the submarine experience was to be fortuitous for the Indian Navy in the long run. The severing of the umbilical cord led to more amenable suppliers and a steady build-up of India's naval strength, particularly in the '70s and '80s, with entry of the Soviet Foxtrots and dedicated long-range, deep water and versatile surface combatants, like the heavily armed Kashin-II class missile destroyers

Sadly, in neither the Singh nor the Roy-Chaudhury book is there any discussion on the pros and cons of a brownwater navy versus a bluewater force, or a suggestion of which naval profile would fit the national cause better in the context of limited funds and unlimited ambition. Nor do the writers reflect the debate on these and other issues within the service to show how crucial naval decisions are made. Singh briefly touches on this subject by charting the development of the aircraft carrier and naval aviation on the one hand and of the submarine on the other as effective weapon systems. But he seems to suggest that the proven importance of these systems was reason enough for the Indian Navy to acquire them.

Roy-Chaudhury, on the other hand, uncritically accepts the Indian Admiralty's case for a carrier-based naval air force for sea control, without analyzing whether it is required in the first place. In fact, convincing arguments can be offered that land-based aircraft would have more than adequately filled this role, both operationally and financially. His argument extrapolates the navy's experience with the present (apparently unsatisfactory) arrangement, where the air force controls the navalised Jaguar squadron operational now for many years, listing the inherent difficulties of inter-service coordination. The trouble with this view is that there is nothing sacrosanct about the IAF running the land-based naval air assets. Assuming Roy-Chaudhury has voiced the concerns of an important section in the navy, the question is: would the Indian naval brass have found this option more acceptable had they been in charge of it?

Mihir Roy, as the first naval aviator to command Vikrant, predictably presents the navy's familiar arguments for the aircraft carrier with considerable gusto. The many advantages of the carrier, like provision of local air defence and integral air strike forces, ability to intercept enemy anti-ship missile-bearing aircraft beyond missile lock-on range, and to show the flag in the Indian Ocean littoral and the seas farther afield are sketched out. But, the question that votaries for the light carrier (in the current naval parlance, an air defence ship) in Indian employ never satisfactorily answer, not even Roy, is: Given the limited number of ships of the line in the navy, how to compensate for the relative absence of multi-purpose frigates and destroyers on the seas at the time of war, when these very ships are also needed to form the escort for the carrier/AD ship and to otherwise support carrier operations?

This is not a mere quibble, but for a book published in 1995, Roy-Chaudhury's satisfaction with the Indian Navy's capabilities as 'sufficient for sea control' appears to overlook the fact of obsolescence Two years ago, Admiral V. Shekhawat warned that at the current rate of ship phasing out – far exceeding the induction rate of surface and submarine combatants – the present fleet of some 134 bottoms will be slashed to less than half by the year 2007. And since effective sea control relies as much on the number of vessels as on their quality, are there enough ships to carry out this mission in the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean and its extensive rimland today, leave alone in the near future?

Finally, one finds some conspicuous errors in Roy-Chaudhury's book This is surprising as Brassey's are internationally renowned for their military titles. For example, the Ratnagiri-Vengurla sea front is said to be on the 'east coast' (p. 91) or that India acquired Mirage III fighter planes in the 1980s, whereas actually the IAF purchased the more modern Mirage 2000 multi-role aircraft (p. 118). The Singh and Roy books, both published by an Indian firm, have fewer factual errors.

Bharat Karnad

STORY OF THE PAKISTAN NAVY 1947-1972.
History Section, Naval Headquarters, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 1991.

THIS is an important book as it provides the first comprehensive account of the Pakistan Navy in the initial 25 years of its existence As a publication of Pakistan's Naval Headquarters, there is a distinct tendency to present the official perception of events over the years. At times, however, the subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle, hints retained in the text leave considerable scope for alternate interpretations. Both these aspects of the book are useful in furthering our

knowledge and understanding of the naval force of a country that has a hostile relationship with us. This is the true value of the publication.

Although one disagrees with several basic assumptions of the book, such as the origins and the timing of the Indo-Pakistani wars of 1965 and 1971, no attempt has been made to incite hostility towards India. Moreover, the book does not even attempt to criticise India's naval expansion plans or defence policy, providing instead an unemotional and technical assessment of the capabilities of the Indian Navy. This by itself ought to be of immense significance to naval analysts in India.

The overall tone of the book is sympathetic by nature, and clearly attempts to garner support for the Pakistan Navy. In attempting to do so, however, it starts off on a contradictory note. Whereas the book is dedicated to 'the valiant officers and men of the Pakistan Navy who gave their lives in the defence of Pakistan in the wars of 1965 and 1971,' the text reveals that there was no loss of life on the Pakistani side during the naval actions of the 1965 war! The book also highlights inter-service rivalries from which the navy, more often than not, comes worse off, and stresses its neglect by the government. At the same time, it downplays the achievements of the service over the years.

The book is quite forthcoming in dealing with the problems of the navy during its formative years. At partition, nearly half its fleet of 16 warships remained in Bombay, either awaiting hand-over or undergoing repair and refit. It took another five months for most to relocate to Karachi, amid hostilities in Kashmir. Ironically, this added to the problems of the navy, as the ship-repair and dockyard facilities available in Pakistan at the time were grossly inadequate. The shortage of trained personnel also affected the operational capabilities of the fleet.

Meanwhile, a communication link between the two wings of Pakistan, separated by over 1,000 miles of land/2,600 miles of sea, was finally set up in October 1947, with a naval wireless set clandestinely airlifted from Bombay! In accordance with the terms of partition, naval stores, and even ammunition, continued to arrive in Pakistan from India, despite the outbreak of war between the two countries. This is a positive reflection of India's policy towards Pakistan during the early years of Independence.

Although the Pakistan Navy had plans to acquire an aircraft carrier in the long term, its programme for the acquisition of submarines was far more successful. This was a major achievement for the service, and due credit must be given to the determination and perseverance of the naval officers at the time. While attempts to acquire a submarine from the United States as early as October-November 1947, and from Britain in 1950-51, were unsuccessful, the navy was able to make use of the security relationship with the United States to acquire, for the first time, an American submarine in mid-1963 This boat, commissioned into the Pakistan Navy a year later as the infamous Ghazi, made Pakistan the second country (after Indonesia) among the Indian Ocean littorals to operate a submarine.

It is indeed a pity that the book does not dwell in much detail on this crucial aspect of naval policy, nor even the extent to which this transaction was influenced by the commissioning of India's first aircraft carrier, the Vikrant in 1961 These factors assume considerable significance at the present time when Pakistan's naval strategy revolves around its submarine force, and huge sums of money are being spent to procure new advanced technology submarines from France.

During the 1965 war, action at sea was primarily confined to a single bold Pakistani raid on the Kutch coast by surface warships. However, the most fascinating aspect of the description of the war is the persistence of the myth that the Indian frigate Brahmaputra was struck by two torpedoes from the Ghazi. As a matter of record, the defence and naval advisors of the foreign missions in New Delhi were soon afterwards invited to tea aboard the warship! It appears that two Iranian ships had been damaged in the attack, but this has yet to be officially acknowledged in view of the close relationship between the two countries at the time.

Nonetheless, there appears to be some regret among the Pakistani naval community that although gallantry awards were announced for the naval chief and the two senior officers of the submarine, no officer of the surface fleet which had actually carried out the attack against Indian territory, was decorated.

Another important dimension of the 1965 war is the official acknowledgment that on 11-12 September, following a Pakistani request, Indonesia ordered the immediate transfer of two submarines and four missile boats to Pakistan This took place in spite of a bilateral agreement between Indonesia and the Soviet Union forbidding such transfers to third countries. These warships, however, arrived in Pakistan after cease-fire was declared.

The book reveals, for the first time, the envisaged scope and nature of the naval relationship with the Soviet Union in the late 1960s, and the establishment of the crucial relationship with China in 1970. Following the American arms embargo against both India and Pakistan after the 1965 war, Pakistan approached the Soviet Union for the supply of naval ships and arms. The massive naval shopping list of the Pakistani military delegation to Moscow in July 1968 included four submarines, five destroyers, eight missile boats, four maritime strike aircraft, and nearly 2,000 missiles of various types However, the Soviets were prepared to supply only six missile boats to Pakistan, and even expressed their inability to install anti-ship missiles aboard Pakistani naval ships. Ultimately, no Soviet naval arms or equipment were acquired by Pakistan. The book refrains from discussing whether this was due to the close Indo-Soviet naval relationship at the time.

The first visit of a Pakistani naval chief to China took place in mid-September 1970. During this visit, Chairman

Mao personally advised his naval chief to 'let Pakistan have whatever was needed and could be supplied by China' The contract subsequently drawn up included various kinds of patrol craft and torpedo boats. It is instructive to note that the final contract did not include any clauses on costs or terms of payment!

The Pakistan Navy's dismal record in the 1971 war has been put down to the marked superiority of the Indian Navy. During this period, it was unable to prevent the Indian naval blockade of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) or the destruction of its warships off Karachi Nonetheless, its submarine Hangor was able to sink the Indian frigate Khukri. The more significant aspect of this description, however, acknowledges the total absence of coordination among the three services, to the extent that the navy learnt of the outbreak of hostilities through a public broadcast over Radio Pakistan!

While the book criticises the damage to merchant ships during the Indian naval attacks, it also admits that one of its own ships camouflaged herself as a merchant vessel. The book finally settles the dispute of whether the Indian Navy or the Air Force damaged the oil tanks at Keamari, in favour of the navy Surprisingly, there is no acknowledgment of the intrusion of the American naval task force in the Bay of Bengal during the war in support of Pakistan, or the strategic importance of the blockade of Bangladesh on the outcome of the war.

Although the book speculates that the Ghazi was sunk prior to the outbreak of war on 3 December, it contradicts itself by playing up the version that the boat sank in mysterious circumstances after a massive explosion (ostensibly on the night of 3 December). My own research supports the conclusion that the sinking of the Ghazi took place accidentally With the sudden approach of an Indian destroyer, the Ghazi was forced into a steep dive, resulting in it hitting the seabed and exploding the mines and torpedoes aboard.

Clearly, a few heroes – but no real villains – emerge from the pages. The resignation of the navy's first Pakistani chief, Vice-Admiral H.M S. Choudri, in 1959, is dealt with sympathetically. This was due to differences over policy with the Chief Martial Law Administrator, General Ayub Khan. Vice-Admiral Syed Mohammed Ahsan, the naval chief from 1966 to 1969, is also portrayed favourably Interestingly, neither was at the helm of affairs during the wars in 1965 or 1971. The naval chief during the 1971 war, Vice-Admiral Muzaffar Hasan, was forced to resign soon after its conclusion.

When compared with the two official histories of the Indian Navy so far, this book stands out. Not only is it more lucid, and easier to read, it does not repeat itself nor confuse the sequence of events, as official Indian naval history tends to do. Moreover this book covers the first 25 years of the Pakistan Navy's existence; in India we have as yet reached only the first 18 years. However, the book refrains from answering some important questions, such as the lessons the Pakistan Navy learnt during warfare, or even the nature of its experience with American and Chinese naval weapons and equipment Nonetheless, it is exciting to read about the American offer of three P-3C Orion maritime strike aircraft as early as 1971, and the proposed acquisition of Type-21 frigates from Britain in early 1971 – both of which are of current interest to Indian naval planners. A minor quibble: the work would have benefited from the use of footnotes and sub-headings; but it remains a fascinating read, and is highly recommended. Unfortunately, as only a handful of copies are available in India this may not be easy.

Rahul Roy-Chaudhury

INDIAN OCEAN: Issues of Peace edited by Rama S Melkote. Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1995.

INTERNATIONAL Relations is an intriguing discipline. Its academic discourse is dominated by the school of neorealism. Neorealists argue that cooperation in areas of peace and security is highly unlikely in the international system because of the absence of an overarching central authority. Nations do enter into alliances against real or potential enemies, they admit, but these alliances collapse once the threat fades away These deceptively simple ideas are the intellectual basis for legitimizing the status quo, and equating great power concert with international stability. But international relations is curious and exciting precisely because despite the mushrooming of neorealists in every faculty from Jawaharlal Nehru University to John Hopkins, there are multifarious challenges to this dominant tendency. Subaltern, poorly funded, not always analytically rigorous, but intellectually imaginative and creative nevertheless

The collective mission of these pluralistic endeavours is to challenge the narrowness of the realpolitik of neorealism and look at international relations beyond the regimen imposed by the Westphalian nation state system *Indian Ocean: Issues of Peace* is one such challenge. The volume is rooted in the belief, best expressed by Alexander Wendt's seminal article, 'Anarchy is What States Make of it'. In other words, the idea that discord is inevitable needs to be questioned precisely because power politics itself is socially constructed. The book is based on papers presented at a seminar on 'Reconceptualising Peace in the Indian Ocean' held at (as well as organized by) the Centre for Area Studies, Osmania University, Hyderabad, in March 1993 The fact that it took the book more than two years to be published and more than three to be reviewed is good evidence of the insidious way in which alternative scholarship is effectively marginalised by the publishing industry in this country.

My principal problem with this otherwise interesting book is that even with their incisive critiques of colonialism and neo-colonialism and power politics, there is no real engagement with the fundamentals. Surely we do not have to be postmodernists to realise that images, boundaries, threats and opportunities of and from the Indian Ocean are

all socially constructed. For instance, what is so Indian about the Indian Ocean? Or who decided where the Indian Ocean ends and the Atlantic begins or the Pacific ends and the Atlantic begins? In other words, is the Indian Ocean really such a useful analytical category despite the recent noise about economic collaboration by the rim countries? An ocean, like a region, can and should be studied meaningfully if it defines something: that is, it could enclose a culturally homogenous group or it could share a common historical experience or it could be a zone of violence or a zone of peace Rama Melkote's fluent introduction does suggest that inter and intra state conflicts in many of the states of the Indian Ocean make it a worthwhile subject for study, as also the possibility of its transition from a zone of conflict to a zone of peace. But this theme, particularly the conditions for peace in the ocean, are never really taken up in many of the essays.

Peace, of course, should not and cannot be defined just negatively as the absence of war. Real peace signifies the absence of all structural forms of violence, as well as the conditions for the flowering of all societies and people. Melkote's essay, probably the best in the volume, looks at the threats to peace both at the level of the state and the civil society. The picture she presents may strike some as being excessively dismal, but it is nevertheless a powerful statement particularly against the CNNization of the world

Most of the other essays are competent if eclectic in their focus No coherent theme really emerges from the volume. The essays range from Victoria Brady's 'The Ideology of Race: relations between genetics, intention, meaning, culture and authority' to Gamini Keerawala's 'Crisis of the Post-Colonial State: political process and political violence in Sri Lanka' to Sheela Prasad and Sumati Nair's 'Conflicts over Populations – a gender perspective'. But what unites most of the essays is their opposition to the discourse of the dominant and the hegemony of the powerful. In that sense, it does not really matter whether the book is well produced or not. What is important is that it widens the circle of dissent. And in these time where, as Yeats put it, the best lack all conviction and the worst are full of passionate intensity, this book is a pleasant surprise.

Amitabh Mattoo

UNCHARTED WATERS: A Review of South African Naval Options by Martin Edmonds and Greg Mills. The SAIIA, Johannesburg, South Africa and the CDISS, Lancaster University, United Kingdom, 1996.

SOUTH AFRICA constitutes the only exception where the proverbial end of the cold war era did not lead to any reappraisal of its foreign and defence policies. This is simply because owing to its policies of apartheid, it had remained completely isolated. Instead, five years later, with the transfer of power from the erstwhile white regime to Nelson Mandela's Government of National Unity, various structures and policies are being recast and new priorities formulated

As regards its national defence, among South Africa's three armed forces, the focus has clearly shifted towards the South African Navy (SAN). This is partly because (*i*) SAN was the most neglected arm during the last 50 years; (*ii*) it played hardly any role in inflicting Apartheid on present rulers; (*iii*) its expansion does not have any destabilising impact on regional security; and, (*iv*) that the navy being a capital intensive force needs long-term planning and cannot be built at short notice to deal with any given contingency

But along with these rising expectations, the chaos of defence reorganisation has also resulted in creating difficulties. The vested interests and uninformed public debates have often tended to obfuscate various urgent issues. It is in the context of SAN's decision to withdraw its proposal to buy four corvettes (that too on the eve of a Cabinet meeting) on 17 May 1995 that is the starting point for this study. Taking off from this juncture the book provides a thorough survey of South Africa's naval acquisitions since the early '60s and makes a substantial case for increasing defence allocations and for inducting new ships and equipment.

Among the major factors, the authors highlight how over 95% of South African trade passes through their ports and constitutes about 22.5% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), which so aptly reflects the maritime status of this country. Besides, a 3,000 km coastline creates a patrolling area of over 1.1 million sq km, which makes building a blue water navy an absolute necessity. But contrary to these ground realities the SAN's share in annual defence allocations have been falling from 18% in 1979 to 6.2% in 1990, though it has recovered to 9.3% during 1995-96 This has resulted in a sharp decline in SAN's vessels from 37 to 24 and in its personnel from 15;000 to 8,300, leading to disbandment of the Marine Branch which had been established in 1979.

Accordingly, when the SAN proposed acquiring four new patrol corvettes in May 1993 it found widespread support among the strategic community until it clashed with the ANC's social reconstruction and development priorities. This book, though narrowly focused on the issue of procuring corvettes, makes an impressive chronological survey of various initiatives/proposals and negotiations. It details the lobbying before the Cabinet met to decide on this issue. This allegedly created tremendous pressure on the SAN which then voluntarily withdrew its request on the eve of the Cabinet meeting Taking this one episode as an example, the book makes a strong case on how and why naval modernisation should be a national priority, and projects various complications that affect South African defence planning today as it gradually moves towards democratisation of its decision-making.

Swaran Singh

ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS: Challenges of Development edited by V. Suryanarayan and V. Sudarsen Konark Publications, Delhi, 1994.

MANY books have been written on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands but this one stands apart as a collection of papers on all aspects of these islands; from historical contacts, to their current day strategic significance. A group of well-regarded authorities from Indian academia and the administrative services have written on diverse issues.

An important reason for reviewing this book is that these are forgotten islands, especially by India. The publishers and the Society for Indian Ocean Studies should hence be congratulated for their effort. Having lived on these islands for four years, I do feel that there is a great paucity of information regarding its many aspects. However, this has not deterred many educated writers from churning out half-baked articles without taking a holistic view of the entire gamut of activities. To this extent the book truly gives a multi-dimensional picture of these islands.

The most interesting aspect of these islands is the presence of primitive and not so primitive tribal groups, both Negrito (Andamanese, Santinalese, Jarwas, Ongi and Shompens) and Mongoloid (Nicobarese). The Negrito groups are generations behind in development from the Mongoloids and the variations and differences within the Negritos is also very wide. Articles by T.N. Pandit on the primitive groups, V. Sudarsen on demographic trends of various tribal groups and M A. Kalam on ethnocide do reflect their problems. Romulus Whitaker's description of the environmental issues and wildlife assets of these islands takes into account the interaction between environment and the tribals. He concludes that the local administration has not taken environmental issues seriously, and has summarised his recommendations. Among them, he suggests the total phasing out of the timber industry, entrusting the Forest Department with the role of watershed management, banning the influx of settlers from the mainland, and giving primitive groups total protection, while at the same time developing a sensitive plan for tourism.

The Andaman and Nicobar group of over 350 islands are known for their rainforests and marine flora and life. Controlling about 20% of India's coastline, with about 86% area under rainforest, the islands are a gold mine of gene varieties and rare marine species. T.G. Jagtap in his essay discusses the mangroves and marine flora, and lists the seagrasses, mangrove species and marine algae. The islands are also very rich in their botanical heritage and rainforests. This aspect has, unfortunately, been largely ignored in the book. However, a description of settlement patterns and development of the plantations of rubber and palm oil has been given.

Lastly, the book reveals the strategic significance of these islands. While the piece on hydrocarbons is correctly placed in the chapter on National Resource Endowments, I would also consider it as part of the strategic perspective. This is because on either side of the archipelago (the tip of Burma facing the Andaman Islands and Sumatra facing Great Nicobar), natural gas and oil respectively have been found. While nothing worthwhile has been discovered in the Andamans, we should remain optimistic.

The strategic importance of these islands has been discussed in K.R. Singh's article, over a background of European colonial policy and events of World War II. The importance the Japanese attached to these islands, which they occupied for over two years during the war, has hardly been discussed They realized the geopolitical importance of these islands and decided to invest heavily in their fortification. A large number of these islands still have cement bunkers with cannons protecting them. The Japanese built two airports, one at Port Blair and the other at Car Nicobar, and a port each at Port Blair and Nancowry, in order to use the islands as a launching pad for their attack on India. These islands would, perhaps, have remained Japanese but for their defeat in the war.

Our post-independence defence policy did take into account the importance of these islands, but, perhaps due to financial constraints, nothing substantial was done Indonesia did make some claims on the Nicobar Islands but this was amicably settled. On the northern side, Coco Island was transferred by India to Burma. It is now reported that the Chinese are helping Burma to construct a base on it This issue has not been discussed in the book, which I consider a major omission. However, the relevance of a strategic policy towards Southeast Asia and the comparative naval strengths of India, Bangladesh, Burma, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand have been discussed. The concept of 'Fortress Commander' as a unified command has also been debated.

But perhaps more important on a day-to day basis is the need to guard our huge economic zone around these islands. Heavy poaching by foreign trawlers has led to the growth of the coast guard since 1978. As an organization entrusted with guarding our economic zone, it is directly under the administrative control of the Ministry of Defence. The growth of the coast guard is of considerable importance.

In conclusion, this book makes a significant contribution by presenting a holistic study of these islands. However, it lacks a conclusion which could have analyzed the various issues raised in the articles, and brought out the conflicts inherent in them. In fact, any policy prescription for the Andamans is riddled with conflict. The arguments of development vs preservation, tribal policy vs mainlanders, economic exploitation vs conservatism, and tourism vs closed policy are some issues where a reasoned analysis is required.

Sanat Kaul

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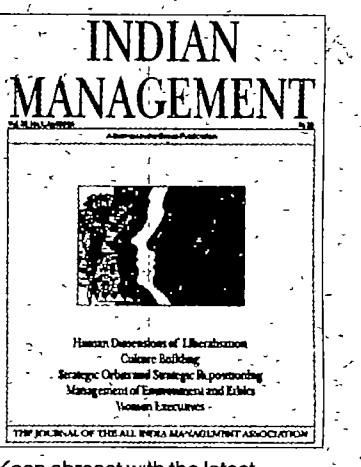

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BRASSTACKS AND BEYOND: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia by Kanti P. Bajpai et al Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1995

CRISIS PREVENTION, CONFIDENCE BUILDING, AND RECONCILIATION IN SOUTH ASIA edited by Michael Krepon and Amit Sevak Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1996

THERE is a surprising dimension to both these books the absence of solid scholarship, notwithstanding their academic garb. This is odd since an impressive army of experts has been harnessed in each Despite this, however, the volumes are not without patches of good, researched writing and the stray reflective thought

Both books employ Indian, Pakistani and American expertise. This naturally raises expectations of textured writing, but these are not fulfilled A possible reason may be that the key issue under discussion – confidence-building measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan – receives merely 'technical' treatment. Thus, the really interested reader may find some guess-work about why the existing CBMs (such as the established telephonic contact between the Director-Generals of Military Operations in India and Pakistan) failed to produce any useful result during the Brasstacks 'crisis', or the pitfalls facing India and Pakistan if they do not roll back their nuclear weapons programme But it is unlikely that such a reader – whether Indian, Pakistani or American – will truly be impressed Of course, academics interested in these disciplines might want to look in, such are the hazards of their pursuit!

The books in question may have acquired some depth had they included contributions from the perspectives of the national histories and politics of India and Pakistan to explain the conditions under which the two countries – born of the same womb and until fifty years ago governed by a common central authority – are likely to reduce or eliminate mutual animosities. If that goal is not addressed, it is unlikely that any amount of technical sophistication in setting up CBMs will prove genuinely effective. For a similar reason, it is not enough to adduce illustrations from the cold war to stress the importance of CBMs, for there, too, these became meaningful only after Gorbachev came up with his startling unilateral proposals which stemmed from his grand but aborted design to re-order his own society and system in an unprecedented manner

It is important, therefore, to appreciate that political sagacity has no equivalence But perhaps the authors of these studies allow for the political factor without saying so There is, thus, an unstated suggestion running through both works that India and Pakistan might botch it, allowing tension to spill over into conflict, if there were no 'honest broker' (a la Bajpai et al) to help them navigate the stormy waters, and that friendly go-between is obviously the U.S. In such a scheme, clearly, the regional presciptions of Washington for South Asia become the surrogate for self-induced political calm between India and Pakistan

Therefore, predictably, these writings support the regional security conference proposal for South Asia aimed at helping the two 'belligerents' in resiling from their nuclear weapons programmes But, alas, the espousal may have come too late, for Washington itself is by now looking at other ways to rein in New Delhi and Islamabad.

What is true, of course, is that these publications were planned four or five years ago, at a time when Washington was actively lobbying a range of such ideas, dealing with CBMs in the context of a certain view of international security affairs Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why scholars drawn from different countries should produce a book on 'Operation Brasstacks' eight or nine years after the event, and another on crisis prevention and CBMs between India and Pakistan six years after a scare (1990) was generated in Washington that Islamabad and Delhi were close to a fourth armed conflict that may have nuclear dimensions Though no Indian or Pakistani took these fanciful scenarios seriously, the U S administration used the opportunity to pat itself on the back and spread the word that but for its timely intervention, the old foes may have decided to play foolhardy games.

The book co-authored by Bajpai et al is a slim, reader-friendly volume that deals with the Brasstacks affair in fair detail for those who may not have heard of it It attempts to tell how the whole operation was viewed in Delhi, Islamabad and by 'the influential observer' – Washington. However the chapters dealing with perceptions in India and Pakistan are little more than familiar repetitions.

A major methodological flaw is that the authors, in the manner of professional hacks, have based a good deal of their work on 'sources' in order to persuade the reader of their beliefs, hypotheses or contentions. The sources referred to are from within the army or high officialdom in India and Pakistan. Journalists, especially political reporters, get by using this technique because they offer themselves up for scrutiny on a daily basis, and risk being proved wrong. A book, it must be stressed, is different, for the reader has no means of checking, unless the sources are named A connected matter is careful footnoting. In the chapter, 'Pakistan: Response and Escalation', there is a reference to Lt. Gen. K.K Hazari, then vice-chief of staff, stating that India expected 'another major war with Pakistan', but the reader is not provided with any supporting reference, even though the author claims that this was seen as a significant observation in Pakistan.

It is only fair to point out that the book throws up at least one challenging question: whether, from the Indian point of view, it is better to deal with a democratic Pakistan, or with a military dictatorship in Islamabad This vital issue is addressed only peripherally whereas it deserves more detailed treatment, especially as it ties up with the political factor which, in the opinion of this reviewer, holds the key to meaningful CBMs.

It is pertinent to ask whether the Simla agreement was a good example of a CBM or not. Neither volume refers to this landmark understanding under which 100,000 Pakistani POWs were allowed to return home from India, merely on Zulfiqar Bhutto's asking Such a gesture in the setting of a cold war Europe would have been built up as a huge CBM, but the authors of these volumes are silent on this Again, it is interesting to note that a reduced Indian defence budget is not mentioned as a political CBM in either volume

In the book edited by Krepon and Sevak, Michael Krepon's own chapter provides a comprehensive feel of the current state of Indo-Pak relations. The chapter lies at the heart of the volume. The principal weakness afflicting the two works under study – reliance on the role of the external agency to make CBMs really work in South Asia – applies to this chapter specially. It would also have been useful had the author included existing CBMs between India and China in the discussion. Since Rajiv Gandhi's famous Beijing visit in 1988, and the follow-up by Narasimha Rao in 1993, the two neighbours have calmed their border through carefully negotiated means, a major contrast with the India-Pakistan case. Whether this proves to be a chimera is for the future to reveal, but for some years now there is a sense of political constructive engagement between India and China, despite many negatives. Why has no one suggested that the U.S or any other power interpose itself between Beijing and Delhi to effect a final resolution of the dispute? Why is the Sino-Indian situation different from the Indo-Pak one? A careful study of the political grain and the painful past of the Indo-Pak divide would have been fruitful in answering such questions

A good deal of the book is superfluous, lacking serious analysis, especially parts that deal with economic CBMs and non-military CBMs. However, A G Noorani's article dealing with CBMs for the Siachen Glacier, Sir Creek and Wular Barrage, is outstanding Zhao Weiwen and Giri Deshingkar also provide a competent chapter on improving Sino-Indian relations C Raja Mohan and Peter R. Lavoy's thought-provoking piece, 'Avoiding Nuclear War', grapples with the question of how best to manage affairs between India and Pakistan assuming that both countries possess nuclear weapons

Anand K. Sahay

ERRATA

In Vivek Dhareshwar's article 'Valorizing the Present' (Seminar 446) on p 23, 3rd column, the word 'detour' was inadvertently substituted for 'retour' The sentence should have read as 'What I have called our apprenticeship has been an experience of detour, Political Studies imitates the project of **retour** or return '

In Shree Venkatram's article 'Voices from the Field' (Seminar 447) on p 30, 2nd column, the sentence 'Recounting a regional health camp one of them actually carried a vaccine in a handkerchief!' should instead read as 'Recounting at a regional health camp

The errors are regretted.

The Editor

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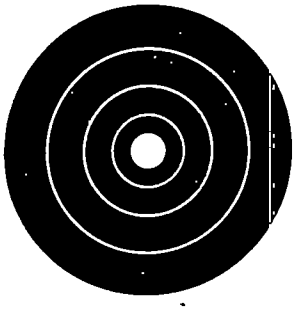

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